

KERATAN AKHBAR-AKHBAR TEMPATAN
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Helping to commercialise R&D products



Norulaini shows her product called 'Smart Gadget'. The function simplifies the process of tailoring because it no longer requires drawing the pattern on parchment paper. — Bernama photo

KUALA LUMPUR: Tailor-made clothes can cost a pretty penny these days.

Therefore, one could save quite a lot if they are able to make their own clothes. It could even be a means of side income.

However, courses that teach the required skills and techniques to make beautiful clothes can be quite costly, costing upwards of RM2,000. Despite the cost, such classes are not able to cover the variety of techniques out there.

However, Norulaini Mohd Ramly told Bernama that she had created several tools that could help even beginners sew their own clothes.

“You can learn sewing skills even without going to classes using the tool that I have created,” said the 35-year-old, who is also the head of the Fashion and Clothing Programme at the Community College in Temerloh Pahang.

She calls her tools the ‘Smart Gadget’. It comprises several sheets of Perspex that functions as sewing patterns for the parts of a garment such as the collar for the ‘baju kurung’, plackets for the ‘baju Melayu’, pockets for shirts or pants and skirts, among others.

Her innovation allows the Perspex sheets to be placed directly onto the fabric and used as a guide for cutting the garment.

“Perspex is a hard and transparent sheet of plastic with a smooth surface, and it is a tool that eases the sewing process,” she explained when met at the finals of the 2016 **Malaysian Commercialisation Award (MCY 2016)** here, recently.

Presenting a solution

The unique idea was born out of witnessing her students’ frustrations in coming up with beautiful yet comfortable clothes due to their failure to sketch a proper sewing pattern.

In sewing and fashion design, a pattern is the template from which parts of a garment are traced onto fabric before being cut out and assembled. A good sewing pattern is essential in creating well-tailored clothes. However, drafting one requires the skills and expertise of seasoned tailor.

Failure to translate the measurements taken from a person into a sewing pattern will result in poorly fitted clothes.

“Patterns are usually drawn out on a paper from the measurements taken down by the tailor. A completed pattern will then be cut out and attached to the fabric as a guide.

“However, with the smart gadget, there is no longer a need to come up with a pattern. Just place the (Perspex) sheets in the size that you need on the fabric, such as for the arms, cut it out, and then sew it,” she explained.

A platform for innovators

“This innovation will benefit many people. Today, tailor-made clothes can be very expensive. These tools will further encourage those interested in learning to sew for themselves, subsequently saving costs,” she said.

Two other products that Norulaini made were the ‘smart ruler’ and ‘smart pattern’, which simplifies the process of drafting patterns and marking sewing lines. More information on the tools is available on the Facebook page: Smart Ruler.

Norulaini’s innovative products were among those featured at the finale of MCY 2016. A total of 150 science and technology products and services by research institutes, universities and local technology development agencies were on display as the event.

Among it were the ‘Quantum Brake Pad’, an environmentally friendly brake pad by SIRIM (Bhd) and ‘Deep Wound Management’, a cell-regeneration process that expedites the healing process of deep wounds.

There were also affordable digital forensic products known as ‘Kloner dan Pen Dua’ by CyberSecurity Malaysia and SimbionteA by SIRIM.

“MCY is the best platform for local researchers and entrepreneurs to commercialise their products,” said Norulaini.

First time ever

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, during the tabling of the 2016 budget, had announced 2016 as the Malaysian Commercialisation Year. The MCY 2016 was held for the first time ever, following the announcement.

It is a joint initiative of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (Mosti) and the Ministry of Finance, aimed at nurturing entrepreneurship, increasing awareness on the commercialisation of research and development (R&D) and its impact on the country's development.

The commercialisation of local R&D products will help innovative products of quality to penetrate the international market, creating brand Malaysia.

To make MCY 2016 a success, every agency involved with R&D was given a Key Performance Index (KPI) that makes it obligatory for them to commercialise at least five innovative products this year.

“The final ceremony of the MCY 2016 is when we will see all the successful commercialisation activities throughout the year,” said the Minister of Science, Technology and Innovations, Datuk Seri Madius Tangau.

The 150 products were created using the National Blue Ocean Strategy approach and are ready for commercialisation on a global scale this year.



A variety of programmes such as advisory assistance and business matching were held in conjunction with the programme. — Bernama photo

Generating income

Madius said commercialisation activities contributed greatly towards economic growth and allowed consumers to become exposed to newer technologies. Cognisant of this, the government is giving special focus to economic development based on innovative creations and supporting it through means of various funds and grants for every phase of implementation of R&D activities.

It would therefore be of great disappointment if public funding meant for the purpose was not fully utilised by the inventor community to commercialise their innovations.

“One of the main drivers of economic growth today is knowledge and the cost of getting education, training and R&D requires a huge investment.

“To optimise the benefits of knowledge and receive a return of investment, the inventions and innovative products need to be commercialised to ensure that the public could ultimately benefit from them,” he said.

A variety of programmes have been implemented throughout the year to realise the goal. As a result, 123 of the 150 products on display at the MCY 2016 was successfully commercialised as at Nov 25, with a commercial value of around RM155 million.

Aid

Success is realised through the triple helix model, which is a joint effort of the government, academia and industry through activities conducted throughout the year. It also connects the inventor community with investors.

This helps equip inventors with various knowledge and skills as well as understanding of consumer and industry needs, so that the end product has market value.

“Our short term plan is to continue monitoring and assisting in the commercialisation of products under MCY to those in the industry. We will do business matching and technology preview sessions through strategic partnerships with various government agencies and venture capitalists,” he said.

For example, Mosti with the cooperation of Usahawan 1Malaysia had conducted the MCY Boot Camp in August, aimed at identifying and building business models and strategic plans for the sustainability of every product for commercialisation.

“Until now, MCY has carried out 20 programmes involving various players in the industry and venture capitalists in the landscape of science, information and technology,” he said.

The government has also made it possible for local technologies to gain foreign funding.

Awards

To acknowledge the achievements of the inventor community, an award ceremony was held during the MCY 2016 with six main prizes worth RM1 million.

Technology Park Malaysia won three awards – the Best Overall Winner, Top Commercial Achievement and the Best Research Entrepreneur Award.

The Malaysian Agricultural Research Development Institute (Mardi), meanwhile, won the Best Research and Business Joint Venture Award and the Best Social Entrepreneur Award.

The Best New Innovator Entrepreneur Award, meanwhile, went to Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. Winners took home cash prizes ranging from RM50,000 to RM250,000. — Bernama