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## Malaysia's drone industry to go full speed with TPM Area 57

The Malaysian Reserve, Malaysia



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# Malaysia's drone industry to go full speed with TPM Area 57

*Area 57 set to open research-to-commercialisation centre for drones*

by FAREZZA HANUM RASHID

**MALAYSIA** can now go on full throttle to promote the Unmanned Aerial Vehicle and Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS), or drone, with the setting up of Area 57.

Recently launched by Science, Technology and Innovation Minister Datuk Seri Dr Adham Baba, Area 57 is a centre of excellence for research and talent empowerment developed by Technology Park Malaysia (TPM).

It offers a five-acre (2ha) integrated ecosystem as a Research-to-Commercialisation centre to accelerate drone tech innovations and talent development in a live environment.

Here, drone-related solutions and technologies will be developed, tested, certified, manufactured, commercialised and maintained to benefit drone users and manufacturers.

The one-stop drone development centre provides a 100m drone track, a 300 sq m drone net area, a mock-up site, a hangar, a laboratory, manufacturing equipment, training facilities, a prototype testing area, operations office and a drone service and maintenance workshop.

Area 57 is also the fourth National Technology Innovation Sandbox (NTIS), which has three other test sites in Felda Mempaga Pahang, Iskandar Drone and Robotics Zone, and urban delivery drones in Cyberjaya.

According to TPM CEO Dzuleira Abu Bakar, TPM through the NTIS has taken proactive measures to foster the growth of the drone technology and robotics industry.

She said the creation, development and commercialisation of technology and innovation, such as drone, will drive recovery and generate the growth of Malaysia's economy as the

country is poised to become one of the leading players in this industry in the global market, which is forecast to achieve US\$41.3 billion (RM171.79 billion) by 2026.

"We have quite a number of renowned players in the market. Aerodyne Group, for example, is ranked as the top seeded drone-based solutions provider in the world by Drone Industry Insights this year. It develops smart cities through drone technology innovation in surveillance and security, infrastructure development, smart agriculture and more.

"Through the NTIS, 25 companies are developing drone tech and solutions, all of which have been given regulatory, funding and commercialisation support," she said.

Dzuleira further provided that Area 57 is necessary for the applications of UAS, which are rapidly moving into various sectors all over the world.

Innovations of new technology to enhance UAS features and functions are actively performed everywhere, including Malaysia.

"Therefore, Area 57 will facilitate and support Malaysian UAS innovators and manufacturers in this new economic industry," she said.

Area 57 is also aimed at providing integrated facilities for UAS innovators, developers and manufacturers where they develop the drone in every step of its lifecycle, from design and testing to service and maintenance.

Here, drone innovators, developers and manufacturers can also engage with relevant government authorities and regulators related to testing activities and certification.

"We offer licence certification training for drone pilots and technical teams to ensure the human capital competency supply will meet future

demand of UAS implementations in Malaysia," Dzuleira added.

Drone owners may also bring their drones to Area 57 for maintenance, repair and overhaul services, at the same time allowing them to engage the community and future generations through awareness events and expos.

Through Area 57, drone technology development can be intensified and its use expanded to various sectors like e-commerce, delivery of essential or medical supplies to rural, remote, or areas affected by natural disasters; infrastructure management and security monitoring in the maintenance of smart buildings, smart cities or maritime; urban agriculture and many others.

Additionally, TPM will be working with other agencies to develop the drone industry in terms of certification, frequency approval, camera approval, as well as safety approval.

These agencies, among others, are the Civil Aviation Authority of Malaysia, the Survey and Mapping Department, Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission, Sirim Bhd, Malaysian Global Innovation and Creativity Centre and the Environment Department.

They also welcome collaboration with academia from various higher education institutes and local drone companies.

According to Dzuleira, among the impacts that are hoped to come out of Area 57 are an increase in potential

homegrown UAS products as well as reducing the cost in services and maintenance; more certified drone pilots, operators and technician through training programmes; nurturing UAS enthusiast communities;





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and creating new jobs including drone pilots and operators, service and maintenance experts, and trainers.

"With the creation of Area 57, we are confident of being a one-stop-centre for universities, companies and students to be involved in the drone industry.

"Many organisations and individuals in the telco, agriculture, construction, oil and gas, training and services sectors can also benefit from the development of drones," she said.

"We strongly believe that this area can serve the community, providing peace of mind for a fly-free environment as envisioned for Industrial Revolution 4.0," she added.

In terms of investment going into Area 57, Dzuleira said RM50 million has been earmarked under the 12th Malaysia Plan (12MP), with RM25 million dedicated for infrastructure construction.

"Under 12MP, we are looking to upgrade TPM into an international innovation hub, where we aim to impact 5,000 technopreneurs and develop 15 intellectual properties next year through infrastructure and facilities, coaching and mentoring, market access as well as knowledge exchange."

TPM will also play host to the first Artificial Intelligence Park in Malaysia where various facilities will be introduced such as a 5G development hub; a sustainable urban farming incubation facility; a biotechnology incubation hub; and an autonomous vehicle and robotics hub.

All these facilities are interlinked, for example, the testing, incubation and development of autonomous vehicles go hand-in-hand with the development of 5G technology.

"Commercially viable solutions more often comprise a mix of technologies, hence it is crucial that we provide an ecosystem which encourages integration rather than develop them in silo.

"With comprehensive facilities and an enabling ecosystem, we are confident of attracting higher investments,

especially via the public-private partnership model," she added.

Meanwhile, the Science, Technology and Innovation Ministry's technology commercialisation accelerator (TCA), which will start operations in January 2022, will provide another platform for the convergence for continuous innovation.

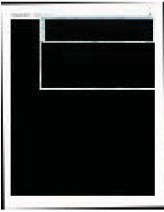
The TCA will also promote commercialisation from grassroots to market through a programme comprising five components, namely Innovation Commercialisation Programme (ICP); technology pilot testing centre; Globalisation of IP Fund; public sector commercialisation initiative for innovative and creative groups; and IP Valuation Training.

"Through these, we seek to not just increase the depth and quality of our IP bank, but also train IP valuers as well as register our IPs globally. Technopreneurs will also have access to infrastructure support, coaching and mentoring as well as a platform to conduct pilot tests.

"We are cognisant that we need to strike a fine balance to fuse an applied piece of research with the right commercial partner, in the right market, to scale, at the right time," Dzuleira concluded.



Dzuleira (right) explaining to Adham (second from right) at the pre-launch recently

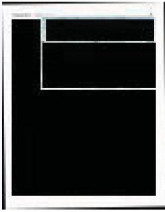


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### SUMMARIES

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