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Wealth of Malaysia: Enriching the nation through innovation

The Star (Metro North), Malaysia



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By Dzuleira Abu Bakar, Chief Executive Officer, Technology Park Malaysia



Kamarul A Mohamed founder of Aerodyne Group, Dato' Sri Dr Adham Baba, Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation and Dzuleira Abu Bakar, CEO of TPM at the launch of the most recent National Sandbox, Area 57.

Over the past year, the Ministry of Science, Technology, and Innovation (MOSTI) has introduced new policies and initiatives to not just boost local innovation, but to galvanise the nation to solve the greatest challenges of our time. These include the new National Science, Technology and Innovation Policy (DSTIN 2021-2030), that guides this ambition, and the National Technology and Innovation Sandbox (NTIS) that brings some of these intentions to bear. The Technology Commercialisation Accelerator (TCA) - a new agency resulting from the merger between the Malaysian Global Innovation and Creativity Center (MaGIC) and Technology Park Malaysia (TPM) to drive security of innovation supply, and to drive ideas to impact, is another such initiative which represent major shifts in our approach to driving innovation and accelerate our collaboration with the market to achieve these goals.

Ideas To Impact

And when we talk about problem-solving as a nation, it's clear that science, technology, and innovation can be beacons in both

wonderful and effective ways. Within 20 years, we may very well see computing power surpassing human intelligence by a billion folds, self-driving cars as our main mode of transportation, and advancements in gene engineering and nanotech rendering disease and ageing obsolete. The exponential growth of technology and innovation also means that the downsides of innovative torpor will be catastrophic at an economic and societal level.

Therefore, aligning Malaysia to science, technology, and innovation is no longer up for deliberation, it's mandatory. Because when we harness technology to solve problems, we create true value for society.

The truth about value and the state's role in creating it

Value creation is more than how much money industries and businesses make, how many jobs are created, or contributions to the GDP. We also need to think about what happens to that value after it's produced - does it go back into the system to enrich it as a whole, or is it siphoned out of the system entirely? For example, are profits

reinvested to help the industry innovate to produce better goods, or is it spent on stock buybacks to boost shareholder confidence? It's time we started working away from spot handouts, small denominations of stimulus packages and towards enhancing a socio-economy that is sustainable, inclusive and circular - as the 12th Malaysia Plan outlines. Because it is able to dictate the frameworks and incentivisation structure necessary to drive market forces to innovate and create true economic value, the public sector is uniquely qualified to steer the nation to solve many public issues.

The MOSTI-led DSTIN 2021-2030, in this regard, takes a longer-term and more holistic view of the innovation value chain with six key thrusts in driving value for Malaysia into the next decade. These are the improvement of STI governance; the empowerment of Research, Development, Commercialisation & Innovation; increasing the use of local tech by industry; enhancing Malaysia's STI talent development; embracing STI and Economy (STIE); and lastly, promoting Malaysian STI to the world.

Local innovators: backbone of the Malaysian economy

More than 40 years ago, Samsung Electronics used to be a low-cost manufacturing company producing cheap TV sets under the Sanyo label. This changed under the leadership of late chairman, Lee Kun-Hee, who spearheaded the conglomerate's transition into chips, panels and smartphones and transformed the company into a global tech powerhouse. Samsung's ascension under Lee's vision is closely tied to the fortunes of South Korea's economy, which contributes an eighth of its GDP.

In recognising the vital role of local creators and innovators to the Malaysian economy, we are expanding our support of advanced technologies key to our growth as a nation. MOSTI's NTIS programme - of which TPM is secretariat - is a great example of these intentions. The NTIS was established to assemble the right players necessary to fast-track cutting-edge solutions to tackle Malaysia's present and future challenges. Over 500 completed applications were received, from tackling a range of risks including food security to access to affordable healthcare.

Here, Malaysian company Biogenes, became amongst one of the first startups in the

world to successfully produce a COVID-19 digital rapid test kit using their proprietary aptamer technology.

Aerodyne, the world's top remote-sensing company according to Drone Industry Insights 2021 is another NTIS participant. They have advanced the agriculture industry in FELDA, creating jobs for the next generation of settlers by introducing exciting technologies in order for them to continue the hard work of their family in newer and better ways while improving agriculture outputs.

Aspiring to drive Malaysia's leadership in the drone-tech industry, the NTIS recently added Area 57, a 5-acre unmanned autonomous vehicle (UAV) center of excellence at Technology Park Malaysia as its fourth LIVE test site for advanced drone-tech solutions. These partnerships bring together relevant players necessary to accelerate the path to progress, such as the Civil Aviation Authority of Malaysia (CAAM) to provide a technical and regulatory framework for accelerated testing, as well as multinational industry players who may be consumers of and partners to these solutions.

The initiatives we've set to lead the charge will be fueled by innovation, and we are compelled to co-create this future with local innovators and industry players.

Just like the Apollo mission which sparked from a singular goal: Malaysia aspires to be a high-income, high-tech, developed nation. The rest of this story will feature collaboration and a whole lot of problem-solving.



Akar Indah Engineering, the innovators behind the autonomous robot for market waste management has been successfully operating at Pasar Ayam Amanjaya, Ipoh since May 2021.



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SUMMARIES

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