

14 NOV, 2022

Supporting successful commercialisation

The Edge, Malaysia



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BY MALEEN BALQISH SALLEH

To rise in the ranks as a high economy, innovation-driven nation, Malaysia needs to ensure that the nation's security of research and development (R&D) supply translates into successful commercialisation.

As such, the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (MOSTI) decided to streamline its resources which led to the merger of two agencies, Technology Park Malaysia (TPM) and the Malaysian Global Innovation & Creativity Centre (MaGIC), to form the Malaysian Research Accelerator for Technology and Innovation (MRANTI) about a year ago.

To spur the intellectual property (IP) commercialisation industry, MRANTI was granted RM30 million in funding as a part of the 12th Malaysian Plan.

A year on, *Digital Edge* checks in with MRANTI Corp Sdn Bhd CEO Dzuleira Abu Bakar to find out more about the agency and its progress in leading enterprises towards product and solutions commercialisation.

Digital Edge: How does MRANTI distinguish itself from other agencies?

Dzuleira Abu Bakar: Many start-ups still struggle to know which agencies to approach for assistance, as some have overlapping functions. Having multiple sources of information and numerous agencies impedes Malaysia's potential as a preferred destination for start-ups.

MRANTI is the glue to connect the ecosystem. Ideas that can be commercialised come to us and, where necessary, we will connect with other agencies to facilitate the requests.

What are some of Malaysia's innovation and commercialisation challenges that MRANTI is looking to address?

- **Supply:** We need to build a strong pipeline as we have the talent and good inventions but have yet to find a clear pathway to market and eventual profitability.
- **Transition:** Getting past the 'valley of death' especially in between the technology readiness levels (TRLs) of four to six where a lot of drop-outs happen.
- **Output:** Provide the correct infrastructure and development programmes in Malaysia's journey towards becoming a tech producer.

How many start-ups and enterprises has MRANTI engaged with? Can you share some of their journeys with MRANTI?

Since the days of MaGIC, we have reached out to 4,503 start-ups, 145,477 individuals and 48 accredited social enterprises, and created RM3.9 billion in economic value.

In 2021, we conducted more than 100 programmes and impacted approximately 11,200 entrepreneurs from more than 700 start-ups and social enterprises who went on to raise close to RM150 million in investment and generated more than RM400 million in revenue.

Since the start of this year, 12 companies have become tenants of MRANTI Park, bringing it to a total of 157 tenants. These include companies in information and communications technology (ICT), biotechnology, engineering, green technology, consulting and support services.

We are expecting 15 more local and multinational companies to take up tenancy by the end of the year, bringing the total occupancy rate at MRANTI Park to nearly 80%, or an equivalent of 645,000 sq ft.

Biogenes Technologies Sdn Bhd is one of the companies that MRANTI collaborates with. We facilitated its discussions on regulatory procedures with the Malaysian Medical Device Authority and coordinated approval with the Ministry of Health for a live test site to collect samples and validate market readiness.

As a result, its test kits have now undergone preclinical and clinical trials at the University of Malaya Medical Centre. The string of events that would have ordinarily taken at least a year was accomplished in several months. Biogenes also received funding through the National Technology & Innovation Sandbox (NTIS) to expand its operations within six months.

What is MRANTI's master plan?

Our master plan involves the development of fourth industrial revolution (4IR) solutions in areas of computer vision, speech recognition, natural language and human/robot, development of technology and talent, data management, R&D and a commercial ecosystem across five clusters — green tech, biotech, smart manufacturing, agritech and smart cities.

MRANTI Park Phases 2 and 3 will include a master plan for land, leasing and property development that will cultivate Malaysia's capabilities in 4IR — from the Internet of Things (IoT) systems, end-to-end IP services and laboratory to contract manufacturing facilities with advanced technologies.

Apart from that, a hyperscale data centre (HDC) will also be a core service that will support a host of technologies that will take flight in the coming years. HDCs would be one of the many tech sectors MRANTI will look to grow and cultivate within the AI Park. It is not just about housing HDCs but looking at the entire incubation of R&D players from academia and industry.

In essence, this is what MRANTI is about — bringing ideas to impact. Our goal is to create impact, so that these can be recognised, appreciated and celebrated the world over.

What partnerships has MRANTI formed so far?

For the past 12 months, we've had various public-private partnerships such as with Huawei, Ericsson, Digital Nasional Bhd, SUKE TV and Telekom Malaysia for 5G services, eServices, content and more in the pipeline.

We've also inked memorandum of understandings (MoUs) with local universities

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Dzuleira



for research, including Universiti Malaya, Universiti Teknologi Petronas, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Universiti Teknologi MARA and Multimedia University.

Through the NTIS, we have a strong network of 35 innovation acceleration companies, which comprise leading technology multinationals, legal firms, financing partners and various experts on board in 12 sandboxes.

What are the industries that MRANTI will focus on? Why?

MRANTI's direction is guided by MOSTI's Dasar Sains & Teknologi Negara (DSTIN) or the 10-10 Malaysian Science, Technology, Innovation and Economy (MYSTIE) framework.

The sectors mentioned in the frameworks are deemed as high-impact areas with multiplier effects such as strengthening local innovators; creating a high-skilled talent pool and quality employment opportunities; leveraging advanced technologies; and addressing pressing national and global issues.

We will also prioritise 4IR technologies involving blockchain, robotics, sensor tech, advanced materials and drones, among others.

For example, in terms of medtech, we will be developing the MRANTI Healthcare Cluster that will accelerate the exploration and development of work in healthcare and medical technology, offering capacity building programmes, laboratories and incubator facilities to conduct stress tests on ideas, prototypes, applications and various related innovations.

MRANTI Park will also feature a Sustainable Food and Agritech cluster which will feature a bioscience R&D lab with state-of-the-art equipment and facilities, an incubation garage to host commercialisation efforts of high potential food or agritech innovators and a vertical farm infrastructure including IoT fertigation for urban farming systems.

What are your targets?

My targets for 2022 are setting up MRANTI as a 4IR innovation hub, impact 5,000 aspiring entrepreneurs to get exposed to 4IR technology such as drone tech, assist 50 companies to successfully build proof of concepts, prototypes and products, enable 1,250 business owners to benefit from various facilities and programmes, and foster RM500 million in value creation.

In terms of longer-term targets, MRANTI hopes to have 500 products and solutions commercialised through the NTIS and Malaysia Commercial Year (MCY) by 2025 and get to the top 20 ranking in the Global Innovation Index (GII) in the same period (Malaysia was ranked 36th in 2021). ■



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SUMMARIES

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