

A showcase of Islamic innovation

The fourth Exposition on Islamic Innovation (i-Inova'13), organised by Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM), took place last month and was a hit as it attracted approximately 7,000 participants throughout the course of the event.

i-Inova'13 was conceived to promote innovation in the creation of Islamic products, create awareness among the public about the latest creations and to understand the usage of Islamic products. The event aims to showcase USIM's potential as the 'Centre of Reference for Islamic Science Products', and to promote creativity and innovation in the development of ummah.

Local and international research institutes were also present at the event, with 16 institutes of higher learning putting up 140 products for competition.

Representatives from the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM), Malaysian Muslim Scientists Association (known by its Bahasa Malaysia acronym PERINTIS), Malaysian Invention and Design Society (MINDS), Special Children's al-Quran Education Foundation (FAQEH) and the Malaysian Association of Special (OKU) Entrepreneurs (PUIM) also attended the event.

Workshops, professional consultations, displays and innovation product competitions for those with special needs were also held concurrently during i-Inova'13. There were workshops to help children speak, build their con-

fidence and help them develop better communication skills.

There were also workshops on palliative care to help improve the life of people with life-limiting illnesses, early detection of disability to help caretakers notice learning disabilities in the young and changing thought patterns with audio-visual aids to help teachers understand and help manage children's behavioural management.

Representatives from Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) shared their experience about conducting vocational training for people with learning disabilities.

Other workshops conducted during i-Inova'13 included one on exploring sensory approaches to stimulate and explore the senses in people with special needs, and a Bal-Ex stroke and gerontology programme for stroke management, which is also a multilingual course.

Additionally, seven institutes of higher learning and international research institutions from Indonesia, Brunei, Gaza, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Sudan and Pakistan participated at i-Inova'13.

i-Inova'13 was held in collaboration with Akademi Sains Malaysia and USM, with the support of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (MOSTI) and the Ministry of Education.

Gracing the event were guests of honour Tuanku Aishah Rohani



Datuk Dr Abu Bakar Mohamad Diah, Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (MOSTI) and top management of **Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM)** with the winners.

Almarhum Tengku Besar Mahmud, the Tuanku Ampuan Besar of Negeri Sembilan and the Chancellor of USIM, and Datuk Dr Abu Bakar Mohamad Diah, Deputy Minister of MOSTI, who presided over the prize-giving and closing ceremony.

There were many categories for participants to take part in, but the main competition groups were divided between undergraduates the open category. Participants were allowed to explore and invent solutions in these categories: pure and applied sciences, technology and engineering, clinical and health sciences, social sciences, arts and applied arts, natural sciences and national heritage, information technology and innovation for special needs.

The judges based their decisions on the product's novelty and inventiveness, practicality and usefulness, status of innovation, presentation and demonstration, and contribution to ummah. The criteria chosen were designed

to deliberate on a product's creativity, market potential, Islamic concept, problem solving, and the inventor's confidence in their own product.

With the theme for this year being Inspiring Islamic Innovative Minds, i-Inova'13 is seen as an expo that is close to the community's heart with the introduction of new product categories for special needs that are based on Islamic sciences.

This year, true to the i-Inova'13 theme, a prize worth RM3,000 for the Islamic Innovation Award, which pushed the contribution to society for the open category, was clinched by Associate Professor Dr Muhammad Mustaqim Mohd Zairif of USIM with his product Uthmanic Model of Quranic Orthography in Braille. This product also holds the Ibnu Maqsum Award for the innovation for special needs where winners receive prizes worth RM1,500.

"There are many attempts at developing the Quran in braille, but

maintaining accuracy is a challenging part of this process," says Dr Mustaqim. "This is where we come in. We have shown that it is possible to apply the Quran in braille. We have also published a book to accompany the work that we've done. We feel that this is a great breakthrough for the visually impaired."

Dr Mustaqim goes on saying that braille is neglected because the need for it is often overlooked. "We don't realise its importance until we need to use it, and we hope to promote awareness in this regard, for the benefit of all."

The Islamic Innovation Award for the undergraduate category was awarded to Dr Mohamed Azwani Shah Mat Lazim of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia with his invention Green Oil Absorbent from Modified Rubber which was also awarded the Ibnu Sina (Innovative) award. Dr Mohamed Azwani won prizes worth RM3,000.

For the open category Ibnu Sina (Innovative) award, the winner was the Malaysian Nuclear Agency with a product titled Nucleonocyte: Portable/Mobile Gamma-Ray Gauge To See Level and Its Content Inside Fire Extinguisher Vessel And Liquefied Gas Tanks. It was led by Dr Jaafar Abdullah.

Associate Professor Dr Aina Abdul Rahim from USIM led a project named Horley Laksa Noodle from Barley to win the Al-Khawarizmi (Practicality) award for the undergraduate category, winning them the RM1,500 prize. This product also won the MINDS (Creativity) award. The open category saw USIM win with their product titled Sustainable Pocket Ecol: Interactive Mobile Learning led by Dr Issham Ismail.

The MINDS (Creativity) award went to Pisang Sdn Bhd with their product titled Dinarpet: Islamic Digital Money.

USIM outdid itself by bagging six gold, two silver, and seven bronze medals. The reception for i-Inova'13 was overwhelming, showcasing talents from various parts of the country. Inventions that did not make the prize-winning list were equally impressive proving that there is an abundance of untapped resources in terms of innovation and brainpower in Malaysia.



Tuanku Aishah Rohani Almarhum Tengku Besar Mahmud addressing the crowd at i-Inova'13.