

MY SAY: Innovation through a larger network

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Comment

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The nation's first-ever Malaysia High Technology Report will be launched this year. This report will highlight and showcase the many activities of the Malaysian Industry-Government Group for High Technology (MIGHT), the compiler of the report. MIGHT was launched as a company limited by guarantee in 1993 and acts as an independent and non-profit organisation to enable consensus building and coordination of industry-government partnership in high technology.

MIGHT provides strategic technology inputs for the industry and government, nurtures technology-based enterprises and entrepreneurship as well as prepares knowledge workers relevant to strategic and high technology industry needs. The initial move to establish MIGHT started in 1992 with the conceptualisation of an idea to foster partnerships between industry and government to promote and identify techno-business opportunities by harnessing science and technology. Today, MIGHT is largely driven by a membership drawn from both the public and private sectors. Its mission is to serve the nation in advancing competence in high technology through partnerships towards sustainable development.

In the drive towards an innovative economy, the government has made a clarion call for initiatives to promote innovation and add the highest value to not only our products but all the efforts involved. While the former is usually clearly understood to be closely related to technical innovations, the latter is less clear in the context of innovation, more specifically that of social innovations. These two dimensions cannot be separated because without the effort, which also means innovative processes and procedures, technical innovation is more difficult to realise. Even if it is realised, it can be limiting if the social dimension is not properly addressed.

Therefore, what needs to be done at the same time is the strengthening and realignment of the triple helix linkages involving not just the government and industry, but also the academia which should act as an idea factory. Or even a quadruple helix, whereby the direct participation of the community, where the pool of talent resides, is welcome.

In this way, a truly bottom-up approach could be undertaken to foster innovation as part and parcel of innovative thinking and lifestyle. For this, MIGHT recently launched My Ideas — a portal that aims to encourage and bring together ideas from all levels of members of the public and to convert these ideas into best practices, with the objective to improve the society and overall Malaysian life. It will act as the platform for all Malaysians to have their creativity recognised and rewarded, with the best ideas turned into reality. To make your ideas a reality today, all that needs to be done is follow the five simple steps listed at www.myideas.my/intro.php

Here, the overarching principle is a world of abundance, not scarcity, since there is no limit to ideas and creativity. In other words, innovation is about breaking down walls and silos that have always been the barrier to the flow of ideas — let alone the cross-fertilisation of ideas — and enriching this to a level where there is larger impact on and relevance to the community.

This is where the fusion of knowledge becomes an imperative, especially between the arts and science, or put simply, that of social and technical innovation. In the course of time, this would mean that the education system must be unified and not allowed to fragment at any cost. While specialisation may be necessary, it must be implemented at a higher level of cognitive learning. Education, after all, is about innovation and not just memorising facts and information in silo fashion.

It is important to be aware of this in the attempt to prepare the nation for the future, where innovative advantages should be supported by a clear foresight in ascertaining direction and trends that would require innovation as a crucial input. In all, it is about national preparedness to mobilise ideas from as wide a participation as possible in seeking newer and more effective solutions in a world full of uncertainties and increasing complexities.

The name of the game is, of course, to act swiftly while ensuring that the innovation cycle keeps turning. The latest, in this regard, is MIGHT'S In-noXchange, developed as a "virtual gateway to inculcate the culture of innovation and encourage the exchange of ideas among all walks of life". It is envisioned that InnoX-change will form a dynamic ecosystem where individuals (or user innovation communities) and organisations can contribute to and benefit from each other.

InnoXchange claims to serve as a platform to promote as well as foster productive knowledge transfer for idea generation, conversion and diffusion, providing online resources of research and commercialisation. Leveraging the concept of "crowd-sourcing" and open innovation collaboration, it is predicted that this concept is the future, whereby creativity across a larger network is the way to go.

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