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SIRIM Advances Twelfth Malaysia Plan Aspirations



Dato' Dr. Ahmad Sabirin Arshad, President and Group Chief Executive of SIRIM Berhad.

As vaccination efforts ramp up, the International Monetary Fund projects that global output will grow by 4.4% in 2022, as economies around the world recover. After two years of lockdowns and uncertainties, countries are looking to build back better in a post-pandemic landscape.

This is certainly true for Malaysia. According to the World Bank, Malaysia's economy is projected to grow by 5.8% in 2022. The Malaysian government recently launched the Twelfth Malaysia Plan (12MP) – the country's roadmap to get the economy back on track towards becoming a high-technology and high-income nation through

inclusive and sustainable growth.

Malaysia's leading industrial research and technology organisation, SIRIM Berhad (SIRIM), is committed to supporting the government's aspirations to accelerate productivity and higher-value-added activities through technology adoption and innovation. The organisation, which celebrated its 25th year of corporatisation on 1 September 2021, has played a major role in the nation's economic growth through industrial research, technical services, industry development, technology transfer and commercialisation, and more.

"In 2022, we are planning the implementation of key projects targeted to advance 12MP goals. The post-pandemic landscape presents various opportunities for businesses. With our years of experience and expertise, SIRIM is the ideal partner to help the private sector enhance competitiveness and move up the global supply chain," says Dato' Dr. Ahmad Sabirin Arshad, SIRIM President and Group Chief Executive.

The Right Ecosystem

According to Ahmad Sabirin, SIRIM's unique value proposition lies in its unrivalled experience and robust ecosystem. "SIRIM is a total quality and technology solutions provider. The Group provides a wide range of services across our eight subsidiaries. Research, development, commercialisation and innovation (R&D&C&I) activities are carried out at our four technology centres for industrial biotechnology, environment technology and machinery technology, and six Industrial Centres of Innovation (ICIs) focusing on bio-medical, nanotechnology, energy management, Bio-NG, sensor and smart manufacturing."

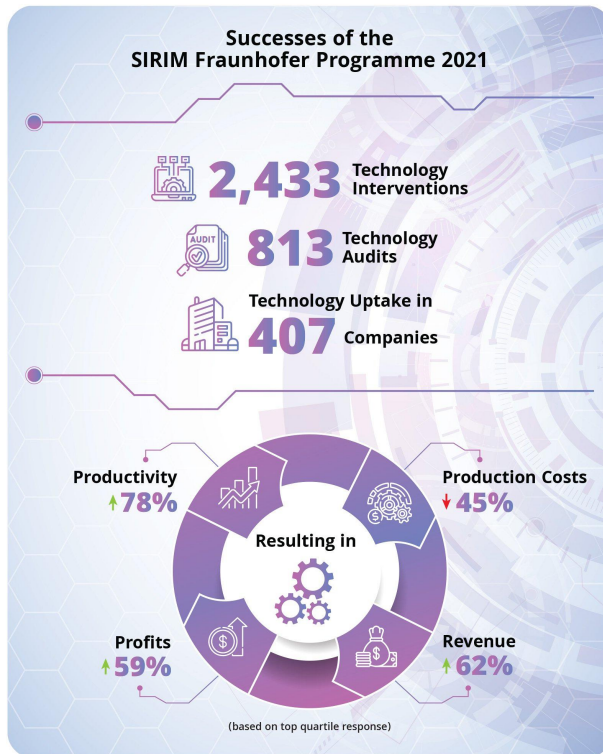
"This is further supported by the SIRIM Digital Factory, through which SIRIM will spearhead high-end product development and innovation in advanced technologies tailored to customer needs and shifting trends. Technology is constantly evolving, therefore it is important for us to be agile in our approach," he adds.

Through the Digital Factory model, the organisation will prioritise projects that are rakyat and SME-centric, and those that promote the adoption of advanced technologies in the country. SIRIM will also address issues and pain points faced by local manufacturers such as low commercialisation or uptake of innovative products and services, insufficient experts and limited source of funding.

"We will explore, develop and commercialise various innovation using 'garage innovation' and an agile approach. Through our Open Innovation concept, we will engage with external ecosystem innovators," Ahmad Sabirin says.

Industrial Parks Go Eco

One of SIRIM's main focus areas in 2022 is to provide technological support for the development of eco-industrial parks (EIPs). This aims to boost productivity through the adoption of a circular economy model in the manufacturing sector.



“Traditionally, tenant companies dispose of waste independent of one another. The EIP model employs the industrial symbiosis process, where waste and by-products of one company are reused by another. This encourages resource efficiency and prevents pollution,” Ahmad Sabirin explains.

“Businesses can better manage raw materials consumption, reduce expenses on waste disposal and increase their revenue from the sale and exchange of waste and materials, as well as transition to more productive and sustainable modes of production. Furthermore, effective and sustainable park management based on internationally-recognised standards will make Malaysian industrial parks more competitive and attractive to investors.”

SIRIM’s role is to assess the readiness of industrial parks in Malaysia in adopting the EIP model. This includes nurturing EIP awareness, providing recommendations towards establishing a national EIP policy, creating performance criteria and KPIs to facilitate effective park management, and conducting Resource Efficiency and Industrial Symbiosis (REISO) assessments.

“The focus in 2022 will be on developing the E-Industrial Symbiosis (E-IS) platform to facilitate the data exchange between tenant companies through the application of geographic information system (GIS),” Ahmad Sabirin reveals.

Making Manufacturing Smarter

Disruptive technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, the Internet of Things and Big Data are changing the face of the manufacturing industry. In line with the Industry4WRD: National Policy on Industry 4.0, Malaysia aims to become a strategic partner for smart manufacturing and the primary destination for the high technology industry.

“SIRIM is a key driver of Malaysia’s I4.0 agenda. We are tasked by the government to assess SMEs’ readiness to adopt I4.0 technologies. SIRIM also develops homegrown solutions to increase productivity and competitiveness of businesses, thus helping them enhance digital capacities and integrate smart manufacturing models such as Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP), intelligent facility management, shop floor automation and compliance.”

“We do so through the SIRIM Fraunhofer Programme, a strategic collaboration between SIRIM and Germany’s Fraunhofer Institute, aimed at accelerating technology adoption among local SMEs. SIRIM conducts comprehensive audits on the company’s production, labour, management and technology capabilities. Our intervention is in the form of technical advisory, Innovation Accelerator programmes, the introduction of integrated processes driven by real-time data management, and development of standards and best practices. This is in line with the national agenda under the 12MP to accelerate MSME digitalisation,” Ahmad Sabirin explains.

He also reveals that in under five years (2016-2021), a total of 1,898 companies across all industries have benefitted from this programme, resulting in SMEs involved enjoying a 60% increase in production capacity and a 40% hike in sales.

Enhancing Capabilities in Healthcare

The medical devices industry is another growth sub-sector, and was first identified as such under the Eleventh Malaysia Plan (11MP). The industry is growing – the country’s exports of medical devices increased by 24.9% to RM29.99 billion in 2020. Investments into the sector also increased substantially from RM4 billion in 2019 to RM6.1 billion in 2020.

“SIRIM will help medical devices manufacturers enhance competitiveness by providing testing, inspection and certification, training, calibration and measurement services,” Ahmad Sabirin explains. “We also facilitate industry growth by supporting product innovation and technological capacities. SIRIM recently established the Medical Device Innovation Centre (MDIC) to increase capacity, capability and expedite the transfer and commercialisation of technology.”

In 2022, SIRIM will further promote the development of complex products that meet global demands and enhance compliance with standards and regulations. The game plan is to establish accredited biocompatibility, biochemical, biomechanical and microbiology testing and sterilisation services,

increase the number of local experts in the field and raise the number of SMEs that can adapt the latest technology by 60%.

Furthermore, by leveraging expertise in Additive Manufacturing (AM) and prototyping, SIRIM aims to establish a medical devices 3D design repository.

The Best Partner for Innovation

These initiatives are in line with SIRIM's vision to become a champion of frontier technology by 2025. Ahmad Sabirin states, "SIRIM will move forward with Malaysia in the journey to embrace new technologies and increase demand for complex products and sustainable solutions."

"The pandemic has altered the way businesses operate. While we strive to remain optimistic, the emergence of new variants is a reminder that the road to recovery will not be linear. I strongly urge Malaysian companies to kick-start their digital transformation by converting challenges into opportunities. And SIRIM is here to help every step of the way," the SIRIM Group Chief Executive affirms.