Automated Equipment Sector Facing Stiff Competition

The local automated equipment manufacturing sector, which has been the driving force behind Penang's industrialisation for the past 30 years, is facing a shortage of quality design engineers in the country as well as strong competition from China-made products. Pentamaster Corp Bhd executive chairman C.B. Chuah said that China was starting to design higher-end automated equipment with innovative features and are priced 40%-50% lower than Malaysia-made units. He added that the majority of younger-generation engineers in Malaysia also do not have the ability to do design work.

AT Systemisation Bhd managing director Beh Lai Lien said there was a shortage of quality technicians in small and medium machinist workshops that supported the automated equipment industry. Beh also said the local automated equipment makers were not receiving a high volume of orders from the domestic market to enable them to produce cost effectively. MMS Ventures Bhd managing director T.K. Sia said the engineering curriculum at local universities is too theoretical, not giving sufficient attention to the practical needs and trends of the automated equipment industry. In addition, Sia suggested that the Government look into giving rebates to companies that buy locally-made automated equipment to encourage the purchase of locally-made equipment as practised in China.

Penang Skills Development Centre (PSDC) chief executive officer Datuk Boonler Somchit said the education system did not produce sufficient engineers to fulfil the needs of multinational corporations and small and medium enterprises, particularly in the areas of design and development. He pointed out that PSDC has been involved in developing a programme for diploma and degree holders to acquire the hard and soft skills in engineering in the shortest time possible via a finishing school concept, which provides both the theoretical and practical aspects of training for specific employment. Datuk Boonler stated that PSDC has applied for a substantial grant to start operating the finishing school for engineers as soon as possible under the 10th Malaysian Plan.

(Sourced from The Star)

Stadium Roof Collapse Caused by Multiple Flaws

A detailed 60-page confidential report finalised by an investigation committee that was tasked by the Public Works Department found that some of the main contributing factors behind the roof collapse at Stadium Sultan Mizan Zainal Abidin in Gong Badak on June 2 last year included serious engineering flaws, shoddy workmanship, inferior materials and lack of expertise in the key project management team. Mentri Besar Datuk Ahmad Said said the committee also determined that the main cause of the collapse was, among others, the faulty design with failure to take into account the support condition of the roof structure. He added that not only did the management team failed to conduct a design analysis, other factors contributing to the collapse included the undesirable manner in which the structure was erected and that no checks were done during the erection process. He said the committee also recommended the appointment of a new team of consultants based on a quality-based selection system and accredited independent check engineers, and that repair works should be undertaken by a specialist contractor.

(Sourced from The Star)

Winners of Digi Deep Green Challenge for Change

At the inaugural Digi Deep Green Challenge for Change, Team D'Regen from Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang, and Feng from Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, Sarawak, were crowned the champions of the main and topical challenges, and won RM50,000 and RM20,000 respectively. The six-month competition, aimed at inspiring young Malaysians to discover new, meaningful and innovative renewable energy solutions, saw undergraduates working on a series of challenges that focused on energy efficiency solutions for the mobile telecommunications industry and renewable energy solutions for Malaysian communities. Challenge for Change is aligned with Digi's Deep Green programme, which addresses energy efficiency within the company's business, and broader areas of sustainability with related stakeholders. Digi.com Bhd's chairman, Sigve Brekke, stated that DiGi's Deep Green programme aims to directly reduce its CO_2 footprint by 50% by 2011.

(Sourced from The Star)

GE Supplies Gas Turbine to Ranhill Plant

GE recently announced the commissioning of the first Frame 6FA gas turbine supplied to the Ranhill Powertron II plant in Sabah. President of GE Energy, Asia Pacific, Kenji Uenishi stated that the 190-megawatt combined-cycle facility will play a significant role in the ongoing development of the Sabah region. He added that, by implementing high efficiency, advanced F-class gas turbine technology, the new facility will offer lower fuel consumption and improve environmental performance. GE supplied two Frame 6FA gas turbine-generator packages, training and technical advisory services and performance testing. GE and Ranhill have also signed a 21-year contractual service agreement that covers repairs, upgrades and outage services for the turbines. Ranhill Power Sdn Bhd's Chief Executive Officer Norlian Abd Rahim said that the new plant will help Sabah meets its short-term energy needs while also playing a key role in the overall enhancement of the region's energy infrastructure. Both the Ranhill Powertron I and II plants are owned by Ranhill Power Sdn Bhd, a subsidiary of Ranhill Bhd.

(Sourced from BERNAMA)