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Pupils show off inventions

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KUALA LUMPUR: Little minds are at work at the three-day 19th International Invention, Innovation & Technology Exhibition (ITEX08), with 10- and 11-year-olds in the running for the grand prize for creative inventions in the primary school category, where five teams are competing.

Eleven-year-old Chang Yun Qian was busy manning her booth, which showcased her pepper spray watch-with-alarm invention complete with an alarm to ward off would-be kidnapers.

Chang of SJK (C) Chukai, in Kemaman, Terengganu said the rising crime rate against children prompted her and her schoolmate Wong Hui Yin to come up with the pepper spray watch-with-alarm in the span of a month.

Not only that, Chang did her best to market her invention to visitors.

"Here's how you do it," she said, before squirting the liquid onto a face towel, much to the relief of those standing close to her.

Chang and Wong are among 50 exhibitors at ITEX08 organised by the Malaysian Invention and Design Society. There are over 500 inventions on display during the three-day event. Participants include teams from local universities and companies as well as individual inventors from here and from Australia, Italy, Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Iran and Croatia.

Three 10-year-olds from the same school in Terengganu were pouring liquid from one container



Chang Yun Qian with her pepper spray watch-with-alarm invention.

into another using a funnel to demonstrate how the funnel with a simple straw managed to get the liquid through faster than the one without.

"We would see our mothers waiting for all the liquid to pour out, so we came up with this faster way. The straw is an outlet for air pressure," she explained.

Mohd Saddam Kamarulzaman and Mohd Zulfadzli Osman, both 17, from SMT Muadzam Shah Pahang sought to help their friends in the school's building construction course who found using the wheel barrow heavy going.

The two boys came up with an in-

vention aptly named Ez Barrow. With the click of a button, a simple high pressure absorber helps to tilt the tray of the barrow when it is being emptied. "It is not motorised, so it's environment-friendly. We created this system in four months," said Mohd Saddam.

Meanwhile, Deputy Higher Education Minister Datuk Dr Hou Kok Chung, opening the exhibition, said research and development from different fields were necessary for innovation. In view of this, the government had set a target of 50 researchers, scientists and engineers per 10,000 workforce under the Ninth Malaysia Plan

To attain this, it was increasing the number of lecturers with PhD qualifications or its equivalent to 60 per cent of staff members by 2010, contrasted with 31 per cent at present, he said.

"The government has allocated RM1.2 billion to sponsor 6,300 local lecturers to pursue studies to PhD level," Hou said, adding that the government also aimed at designating two more universities as research universities by 2015.

At present, the research universities are Universiti Malaya, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia and Universiti Putra Malaysia.