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Sunday October 17, 2010

## Practical solutions

By TAN EE LOO  
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IMAGINE you are a designer who has been given a project to build a highway that cuts through the steep mountainous terrain in a remote part of Sabah by the Public Works Department.

A section of this highway will pass through a valley spanning about 200m and 20m deep.

Another factor that needs to be taken into consideration is the wild animals living in the jungle.

However, the construction of a bridge as a solution has been ruled out due to logistical reasons such as accessibility and costs constraints.



The winning team Top Consultant beaming with joy at the prize-giving ceremony.

The Nehemiah Design Competition 2010, which concluded recently, posed this challenge to students in higher education institutions nationwide.

So, what would you do to overcome the challenge?

For grand prize winner, team *Top Consultant* from Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR), their ingenious solution is to recycle and reuse old tyres, which are light and cost-effective to be transported through the mountainous terrain.

As for the wild animals, the team proposed the construction of a small tunnel for the animals to cross over to the other side of the road to prevent them from crossing the roads dangerously and obstructing the traffic.

"I saw a documentary on the National Geographic Channel on the construction of a railway in China, where they built a tunnel for the animals to cross to the other side of the railway. I thought that was a brilliant idea so I decided to propose the idea to my team," said engineering student Chiew Yi Zhong.

Yi Zhong and his team took home a cash prize of RM5,000 and a plaque in the inaugural competition.

Team *Quad* of Universiti Teknologi Malaysia and *Gephyrophobia* of UTAR walked away with cash prizes of RM3,000 and RM2,000 respectively.

A total of 12 finalists were selected from several universities and colleges from across the country to put their engineering and architectural designs to the test.

Participants in the competition were expected to use creativity and innovative thinking to propose a solution that was both structurally sound and aesthetically pleasing.

The proposed solution had to be presented in the form of a scale model measuring no larger than 1m length x 0.5m width x 0.5m height complete with its technical specification.

Another criteria was the cost for constructing the scale models — each model should cost no more than RM200.

Impressed by the quality of the entries, Nehemiah Reinforced Soil Sdn Bhd managing director Dr Nehemiah Lee said it was evident the participants put in a lot of effort in the competition.

"I could see that the students have tried their best to think, research and design their submission, not just the technical aspects but also the creative side as well," he said.

Describing the competition as a good exposure for the participants, Dr Lee said the winning ideas could be applied in real life if the technical aspects were properly researched based on sound engineering knowledge.

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