

**Budding designer:** Nor Zamira Zamri plans to submit two designs — the Gami Chair and Floating Shelf — for The Ideation Award 2011.



# Furniture with an edge

## USM students join design workshop

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Photos by ZAINUDIN AHAD

INNOVATIVE and revolutionary, the dream pieces of furniture conjured up by a group of 25 Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) students in Penang could possibly grace our homes in the not too distant future.

Showcasing their eye-catching pieces at the Ideation Award 2011 Design Workshop at USM's School of the Arts, the second and third year product design undergraduates were all hopeful of striking it big.

After similar workshops at LimKokWing University, Universiti Teknologi Mara (Selangor) and Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (Johor) later this month, the top 10 designs out of 220 total entries nationwide would be sent for prototyping.

The 'best of the best' designs will then be put on display at the Malaysia International Furniture Fair 2011 (MIFF) at the Putra World Trade Centre and Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre from March 1 to March 5, next year.

The *Star* is the media partner for the fair. The event is themed *New Urbanism, Innovation and Sustainability*.

The entries will be judged on their designs, aesthetics, uniqueness, functionality, safety and consideration towards the environment.

Besides having global appeal, the designs also have to be uniquely Malaysian and focused towards single urban occupants, taking into account limited spaces in an urban household, while also being adaptable and reconfigurable to suit various needs and lifestyles.

One of the participants, Chooi Wei Yee, came up with the Shelf-II, an S-shaped modular wall shelf that could be easily flat-packed and assembled in various configurations.

As having things neatly put away is a daily battle most people face, Chooi believed her design will solve their dilemma, at the same time being a beautiful embellishment on their walls.

"It is targeted at hostel students, who have very limited space.

"It will also be strong enough to support the weight of books, accessories or even clothes," she said.

Another hopeful, Noor Syahidah Ahmad, opted for a Deco Fibonacci Shelf, a design concept inspired by the golden ratio mathematical principle.

"Single urbanites would find it useful, as it



**Tough choice:** The panel of judges headed by Davies (second right) discussing the entries during the design workshop at USM's School of Arts.

could be configured to be a mini library or store anything according to their requirements," she said.

The Trio Shelf, Aini Raihan Musa's brainchild, employed pyramidal shapes in her variable storage device where you could have many possible configurations from one basic triangle shape.

Another eye-catching concept, the interchangeable and space-saving XOX Shelf and Bench, is the pride of Norizzah Nabi Khan.

"Although it's primarily a shelf, if you need something to sit on, you could just remove one segment of it to make a bench," she enthused.

The candidates had to sell their ideas to a panel of judges, headed by chief judge Ian Davies, through short, five-minute presentations during the workshop on Wednesday.

According to Davies, Malaysia is currently among the top 10 countries worldwide for furniture exports, noting a paradigm shift in

priorities from quality and cost to innovation and design.

"We're moving towards a creative age. The competition to be the cheapest is always fierce, so to differentiate yourselves and stand out from the crowd, you need a great design," he advised the students.

Mohamad Omar Bidin, dean of USM's School of Arts, said participating in the contest would help get the students interested and inspired to innovate.

"It's a great platform for them to explore and showcase their talents.

"The exposure will come in handy after they graduate, as it would add to their portfolio and people would take notice," he added.

Held in conjunction with MIFF 2011, the Ideation Award aims to unearth budding talents, while also raising awareness of furniture design as a rewarding, possible career option for those with an eye for innovation.

# Electronics firm celebrates anniversary with new logo

IT was a night of double joy for Penang's electronics giant Ban Hin Bee Sdn Bhd (BHB) which launched its new corporate logo in conjunction with its 50th anniversary celebrations.

About 250 people attended the dinner that was graced by Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng's political secretary Ng Wei Aik, who is also Komtar assemblyman.

Ng later joined BHB managing director Jimmy Yeoh, general manager Wilson Yeoh and other VIPs in placing their palms on a giant button to unveil the company's new brand identity entitled 'Beez With You'.

The rebranding brought about a fresh new BHB in orange and grey with a younger and fresher look, together with a matching set of 'Beez' series.

Wilson explained that the new logo was related to the bee, which was known for being hardworking, diligent, reliable and goal-oriented.

"That's why we are looking to emulate the good characteristics of the bees," he said during the event on Thursday.

The company had embarked on a month-long anniversary sales at all its BHB and Kitchentech outlets in Penang since Thursday, he said.

Jimmy said the company had gone through a series of challenges over the past 50 years.

"We have been through many challenges — be it the market roller coaster ride, the rapid changes in technology, the Internet wave, the evolution of buying behaviour or the media pattern," he said.

He said the rebranding move would include a new corporate logo, informative website ([www.bhb.com.my](http://www.bhb.com.my)) and social media connections at Facebook.

Earlier in his speech, Ng said it was important for a company to rebrand itself from time to time.

"The fastest and one of the most effective ways to sell your product is through branding.

"It gives you an excuse to remind consumers about your company and product," he said, adding that the common mistake by many small businesses was that they underestimated the power of rebranding.

Ng, together with Jimmy and Wilson as well as other VIPs, later took part in the 50th anniversary cake-cutting ceremony.

The night's programme included a live band performance and interactive games to entertain the guests during the function at Hydro Hotel, Batu Ferringhi.



**Making their mark:** (From right) Wilson, Ng, Jimmy and the other VIPs placing their palms on a giant button to launch the new corporate logo (in the background) during BHB's 50th anniversary celebrations.