

Young talents set benchmark

Winning designs of competition to be installed in six MRT stations

story by
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DESPITE her lack of experience, it was her love for classical architectural design that led to Lee Ling being named one of the winners in a Bench Design Competition for the MRT Project.

"The challenge was difficult as I've never done such a thing before. I had to consider both form and function for the structure," said the 22-year-old who is pursuing a Diploma in Interior Design at Erican College, Kuala Lumpur.

Her design, which was done in line with the Islamic corporate theme, will be featured in the Tun Razak Exchange Station.

Lee took inspiration from Islamic motifs, arches and space to design her winning piece.

Lee credited her Iranian lecturer Asmae Rashidi as her source of reference and motivator.

The competition's six winning bench designs will be adapted and installed in six underground stations for the MRT Sungai Buloh-Kajang (SBK) Line.

The other five winners are Siti Nur Hajar Kamsani from UiTM Seri Iskandar (Cochrane Station), Mohd Saiful Anuar Zamri from Politeknik Sultan Haji Ahmad Shah (Muzium Negara Station), Chan Lee Kang from Universiti Sains Malaysia (Pasar Seni Station), Chong Chin Sheng from Erican College

(Merdeka Station) and Chia Sen Chung from Saito College (Maluri Station).

The winners each took home RM7,000 cash prize and a certificate, while 15 finalists were each presented with RM3,500 cash prize and a certificate.

Siti Nur Hajar, 23, was thrilled that her two submissions won her the top and consolation prizes.

"The theme for the Cochrane Station was urban living. Both my submissions were three-sided benches to represent the three major races in Malaysia," she said, adding that the winning design had stronger geometrical elements.

"I tried to relate my designs to the Cochrane area, and referred to friends studying architecture and interior design courses to ensure the urban living theme was met," said the Diploma in Landscape Architecture student.

Siti Nur Hajar said she planned to use part of her winnings to treat the friends who helped her and take her family on a holiday.

A total of 133 designs from 19 institutions of higher learning were submitted for the competition jointly organised by Mass Rapid Transit Corporation Sdn Bhd (MRT Corp) and MMC Gamuda KVMRT (T) Sdn Bhd (MGKT).

The submissions were further narrowed down to 21 pieces by a panel of judges comprising industry experts and the senior management team from MRT Corp and MGKT.

The 21 final designs were put up for public voting in January. The

winning pieces were decided based on a combination of 30% public vote and 70% judges' decision.

While the entries were creative and featured state-of-the-art architecture, MRT Corp SBK Line project director Marcus Karakashian said many of them lost marks on the functionality aspect.

"The winning designs need to be adapted for production, with engineering components added to make the benches safe and tough for heavy use while being functional.

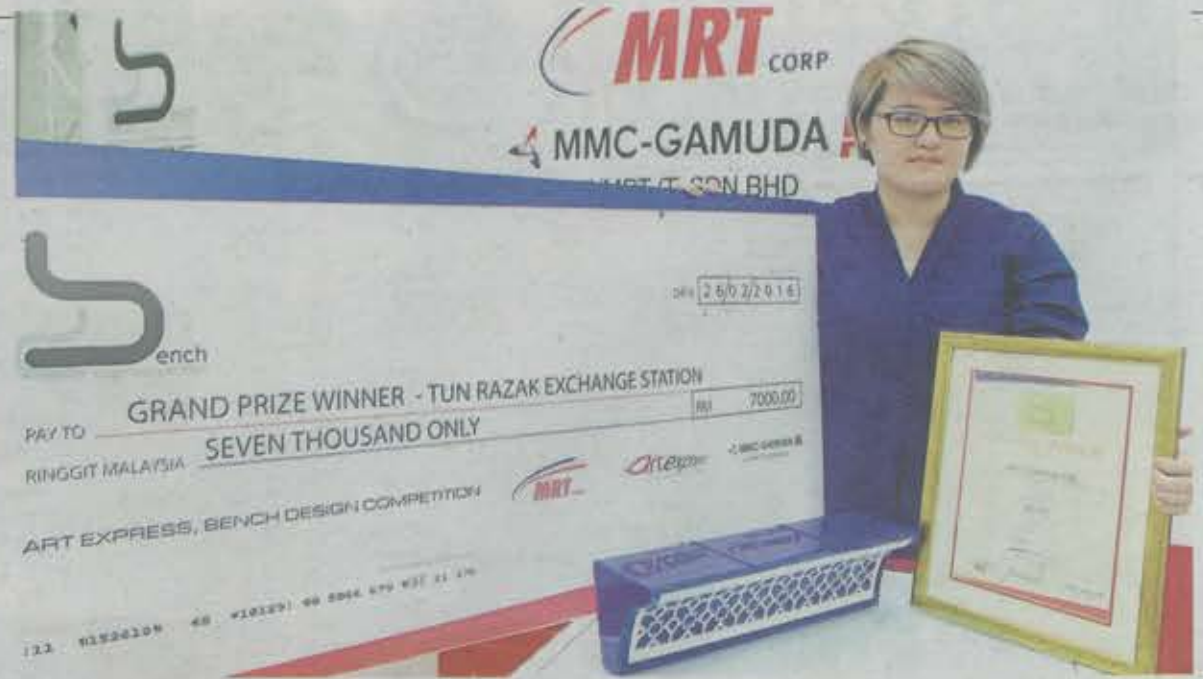
"In this respect, none of the submissions for the Bukit Bintang Station could be adopted for production so there was no winner for that station," he said, adding that the judges would review the other finalists' pieces to be adapted for the Bukit Bintang Station.

Karakashian advised students to understand the purpose of the product and who the users would be.

"Benches used for mass transit must be able to withstand rough handling, durable and support people of different weight. They have to be safe to use, and are easy to clean and maintain.

"The winning entries had to combine uniqueness with good, purposeful designs. They had to be practical with an artistic flair," he said.

Karakashian believed that a similar competition to tap into a pool of young talents for innovative bench designs would be organised for the upcoming MRT Sungai Buloh-Serdang-Putrajaya Line.



Lee's winning bench design for the Tun Razak Exchange Station incorporates Islamic motifs.



Siti Nur Hajar with a scale model of her winning bench design for the Cochrane Station. She said the three-sided element represents the three major races in Malaysia.



Karakashian (fourth from left) and MGKT director Maslan Othman (fourth from right) with the winners of the Bench Design Competition. They are (from left) Lee, Siti Nur Hajar, Chia, Chan (represented by lecturer Dr Safial Aqbar Zakaria), Mohd Saiful and Chong.