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From pineapple to fashion

Lecturer reaps fruit of his labour with hand-woven fabric

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PASIR GUDANG: A lecturer with Politeknik Ibrahim Sultan and his team turned "farm into fashion" when they transformed pineapple leaves into fabric, which is then used to produce other fashion accessories.

Abu Bakar Abdul Hamid, a senior lecturer in fashion design, said the venture started 13 years ago and it took them about three years just to research ways to convert the fibre inside pineapple leaves into yarn.

"Johor is the country's leading producer of pineapples, which means it has a lot of waste such as leaves and peels.

"Instead of discarding them, we conducted research to see how we could extract the

plant's fibre and turn it into thread. After three years, we came up with something that could be hand-woven.

"With the hard part done, we thought there must be at least an end product that we could make with the thread, so we spent another year turning it into kain tenun (hand-woven fabric)," he said.

It could about a month to produce 2.5m of kain tenun, which could fetch RM1,600, Abu Bakar said.

He said it would take another month to produce at least 30 clutches and at least a week to make neckties from a 1m fabric.

"Each bag is sold for between RM160 and RM350 depending on the size, while the neckties are priced from RM180 to RM200 each," he said.

Abu Bakar said eight people were involved in the production, with the raw materials or fibre extraction process being conducted in Pontian.

The fabric production is done by weavers in Terengganu, Pahang, Kelantan, and Yayasan Warisan Johor.

"The products we made have been sent to the Malaysian Pineapple Industry Board (LPNM) and the Agriculture and Food Security Ministry, which will market them in Shanghai and Beijing," he added.

Abu Bakar said each fabric is made with at least 40% pineapple yarn and 60% cotton or polyester

He said the market would be expanded soon, since the country is one of the highest pineapple producers in South-East Asia.



Farming fashion: Abu Bakar displays all the products made from pineapple fibre.

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