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SHIELDING OUR HEROES

COVID-19: THE UNSEEN ENEMY

by Marlin Marissa Malek & Suwannit Chareen Chit

The Covid-19 pandemic caught us off guard. At this point of writing, Covid-19 is spreading like a wildfire, infecting 1.4 million people from 209 countries and territories around the world. Sadly, many have succumbed to this attack by an unseen enemy.

The Malaysian Government announced the Movement Control Order on March 18, 2020. In a flash, offices and educational institutions were ordered to close, businesses shuttered, and social and sporting events postponed or cancelled indefinitely. In some areas, a complete lockdown is implemented. Whether a movement control or lockdown, this pandemic has completely changed the way we live, work and play.

Due to the rising number of infections, doctors are left short-handed. Hospitals face a battle with time, where equipment, supplies, and trained staff members are depleting daily. Pictures of weary medical practitioners and other frontline personnel (frontliners) begging us to stay at home to break the chain of infection is nothing short of a heartbreak.

Humanity in times of crisis.

In a concerted effort, a group of active Makers (a Maker is a person who indulges in technology-based DIY activities which include 3D-printing, robotics, electronics and traditional metal- and woodworking) in Kedah and Perlis, led by Muhamad Kamalrul Zaman Bin Zainol 3D-printed the frame used for face shields to address the shortage of Personal Protection Equipment (PPE).

"We print and distribute these frames to hospitals, community health clinics and security personnel. In times of crisis such as this, our main focus is humanity and supplying the face shields to the frontliners in the northern region of Malaysia is utmost priority", said Muhamad Kamalrul who is a chemist.

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To date, more than 1800 pieces have been printed and distributed to the relevant agencies. Muhamad Kamalrul adds that the printing will go on as long as Covid-19 spreads.

"Each printer takes between 35 and 45 minutes to print two pieces of frame", said Ahmad Hanis Mohd Shabli, from MCMC-UUM MakerSpace Laboratory. He added the time taken to print the frames relies on the design of the frame. The design of the frames is continuously improved and shared with all Makers in Malaysia via their Facebook page.

According to Ahmad Hanis, the biggest challenge faced by these Makers is the fight against time. "Demands are increasing while the filament used to print the frames is depleting. Furthermore, we need to closely monitor the printing process and other parameter such as temperature at all times to ensure the frames are printed properly", he said.

While some are confined in their workspaces, Muhamad Zaim Bin Kassim chose to deliver the completed face shields to hospitals, community health clinics and other frontliners when he is not printing the frames. Muhamad Zaim, a Physics teacher in Kubang Pasu MARA Junior Science College stated that the face shields need to be delivered at a timely manner as the shields are needed for patient screening and used in operation theatres.

"Printing these shields is by no means an easy task. My heartfelt thanks go to all the 14 members of 3D Printing Kedah Perlis who work tirelessly to print, deliver and record request from the frontliners", said Muhamad Kamalrul in thanking his team-members.

Shielding Our Heroes

The frontliners - they have worked around the clock. They braced themselves against the deadly Covid-19 virus. They sacrificed the precious times for your loved ones to care for the lives of others.

In times of darkness, we have nothing but a huge thank you to all doctors, nurses, medical personnel, security forces and all who have tirelessly worked to flatten the curve and make Malaysia free of Covid-19. Thank you to 3D Printing Kedah Perlis for shielding our heroes. ■

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#staysafe
#impactfulconnections

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