MRC INDUSTRY LINKAGE FUND

Application Guidelines



MRC INDUSTRY LINKAGE FUND



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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO MRC INDUSTRY LINKAGE FUND

1.1 DEFINITION OF INDUSTRY LINKAGE FUND

The Industry Linkage Fund is a grant provided by the Malaysian Rubber Council (MRC) to promote collaboration between the Malaysian rubber products industry and universities/research institutions on research projects that will contribute to the development of rubber industry in Malaysia in the following areas:

a. Increase exports and domestic consumption of rubber products produced in Malaysia;
b. Increase consumption of rubber (raw and waste/reclaimed) in new products development; or
c. Facilitate the manufacturing process of rubber products.

1.2 OBJECTIVE OF INDUSTRY LINKAGE FUND

The main objective of the MRC Industry Linkage Fund is to strengthen rubber industry-university/ research institution linkages in Malaysia for the development of the rubber products industry in order to enhance the industry's competitiveness in the global market.

1.3 RESEARCH PRIORITY AREAS

a. The MRC Industry Linkage Fund will give priority to projects that have the potential to improve the competitiveness of Malaysian rubber products in the global market. Focus areas and products for research are as follow:

    i. Latex-based products;
    ii. Dry rubber products;
    iii. Automation and process improvement;
    iv. Application of rubber in infrastructure and construction;
    v. Solid waste reclamation/management;
    vi. Wastewater treatment;
    vii. Green and sustainable technology;
    viii. Energy-saving; and
    ix. Advance manufacturing.

    Note: Details of research priority areas as in **Appendix I: Table 1**.

b. Project to be carried out must be related to rubber processors (midstream sector) or rubber products manufacturing industry (downstream sector). For downstream sector, the project must be beneficial to any CESS paying rubber product as listed in **Appendix II: Table 1.**

c. Research findings from project to be carried out are expected to be ready for commercialization. The project is required to include pre-commercialization and prototype development activities in the proposal.

1.4 ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

a. The application is open to all individuals who are employed on a permanent or contractual basis with the following organisations:

i. Public and Private Institutions of Higher Learning;
ii. Malaysian Research Institutions; and
iii. Registered Industries in Malaysia.

Note:

- Expatriates working under contract with any of the above institutions are eligible to apply. However, the project must have a permanent Malaysian co-researcher from the same institution, well-versed with the project, to ensure its completion in the event the expatriate's contract is terminated.
- The service of a contract researcher must be valid during the period of the research proposed and contractual documents must be furnished as proof of employment for the period.

b. Researchers can **lead** only one (1) project at any time. The researchers/project leaders are required to submit a Final Project Report, before submitting a new application.

1.5 SELECTION CRITERIA OF THE PROJECT

An Industry Linkage Fund Committee appointed by MRC will assess all project proposals based on the following criteria:

a. **Scientific and technical merit:**
The project must be scientifically sound, technically feasible with achievable milestones, and has the potential for further development and commercialisation.

b. **Research competence:**
The research team must have the knowledge and competency to carry out the project successfully to completion.

c. **Innovativeness of the research:**
The project must indicate whether it is recombination, fusion, integration, replication or refinement of existing technologies with improved value, enhanced efficiency or cost reduction. Applicant must conduct a Prior Art Search to verify on the patentability aspect.

d. **Clear and measurable expected output:**
The project must be clear, accurate and consistent with the objective of Industry Linkage Fund. The project must also describe appropriate methodologies and the type of output expected which benefits to the rubber products industry.

e. **Project with proven concept or prototype (pre-commercialization):**
The project must have proven concept which ready for commercialization to test the market. The project must theorise a technology solution to a problem and have a reasonable basis that there is a market opportunity. The theory must be ready to test by building something that is only advanced enough to prove that the concept can work.

1.6 SCOPE OF FUNDING

a. All research projects are required to have a collaboration between a university/research institution and Malaysian rubber products industry to be eligible for the funding. A proposal without collaboration will not be processed.

b. The project leader is required to name the collaborator and specify the role and contribution of the collaborator to the research project in the proposal.

c. There are two (2) types of grants:

i. Full Grant awarded to projects which will offer an industry-wide solution
The project shall be proposed and led by university/research institution. An Industry collaborator is required to be sourced to provide support for the proposed project.

ii. Matching Grant awarded to projects which will benefit individual companies
The project is initiated and led by the Industry (rubber products companies) with expert assistance from from university/research institution. The Industry is required to contribute 50% funding to the project. However, MRC may consider to accept in-kind contribution from the Industry who is willing to commit to the projects.

Note:

- All applications must be accompanied with acknowledgement letter from the respective collaborator on the collaboration agreement of the project.
- Industry collaborator without financial commitment or will not contribute financially to the project is encouraged to commercialize research findings in addition to the roles of offering research materials and testing facilities, verifying and validating the test results, providing technical supports and guidance, etc during the research period.
- MRC may consider converting application for matching grant to full grant if it is deemed appropriate.

d. The quantum of fund approved is according to the project proposal. The maximum fund for each project (under full grant and matching grant) shall not be more than RM300,000.

e. The funding can be utilised for the following categories of research expenditure.

i. Wages and Allowances for Temporary and Contract Personnel;
ii. Travel and Transportation;
iii. Rentals;
iv. Research Materials and Supplies;
v. Minor Modifications and Repairs;
vi. Special Services such as consultation and sample testing and analysis; and
vii. Prototype Development.

Note:

- For full grant, the allocations for wages and allowance, travel and transportation, and rentals shall not be more than 50% of the total project cost.
- For matching grant, there will be no limit set on the allocations of each category, and it shall be according to research proposals submitted by the companies/researchers. The company is required to indicate the categories of expenditure to be financed by the company.

f. The costs of patent filing and registration are not within the scope of the Fund.

1.7 LOCATION OF PROJECT

The research project must be carried out in Malaysia. However, researchers are allowed to conduct testing and consultation overseas, with prior approval from the Committee.

1.8 PROJECT DURATION

a. The project duration shall not be more than three (3) years from the date of project commencement.

b. Researchers are required to provide the following information throughout the project duration.

   i. To submit quarterly reports, i.e. project progress report and financial report to the Secretariat for review by the Committee.
   ii. To give a presentation on interim and final research findings to the Committee. Presentation of interim is a mid-term review of project duration.
   iii. To submit a complete project report to the Secretariat for review by the Committee.

1.9 RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PROJECT LEADER

The successful implementation of the project is the responsibility of the project leader. Project leaders shall ensure that the projects are carried out effectively to meet the specified objectives and milestones of the projects within the approved timeframe and funding.

1.10 RESPONSIBILITY OF INSTITUTION AND INDUSTRY

The Institution and Industry shall be responsible for their project leader's research conduct to ensure that the research is undertaken in accord with the highest standards of research integrity. It shall assume the responsibility for the research until its completion. The Institution and Industry shall also be responsible for the salary payment of their employees involved in the research project.

1.11 THIRD-PARTY COLLABORATIONS

For all projects, the Institution or Industry must undertake work on the project in collaboration with a collaborator. However, the collaborator is not entitled to receive (directly or indirectly) any part of the Fund. The collaborator representative is required to attend the interim project presentation together with the project leader.

1.12 ENGAGEMENT OF CONSULTANT UNDER SPECIAL SERVICES

If a project requires specific expertise beyond the capability of project leader, research team and collaborator, a consultant may be engaged and the proposal to appoint the consultant shall be included in the project proposal. The consultant shall provide expert advice and/or services related to the project without being heavily involved in the design or execution of the project. The consultant must be an independent individual and not from the same organisation and institution with the applicant. They can be from consulting firm or academic institution depending on the qualifications and expertise. A commitment by the consultant to participate in the project may take in the form of a formal letter. If payment is considered, anticipated fees shall be included in the project proposal under the Special Services category.

1.13 REQUEST FOR VARIATION TO THE AWARDED GRANT

Request for any variation on granted Fund must be made three (3) months before the end of the project term. The Committee reserves the right to reject any additional expenses incurred without prior approval.

1.14 VIREMENT IN PROJECT COSTING

Request for any virement within project costing from the approved proposal must be made three (3) months before the end of the project term.

Note:

- No fund may be vired between categories without the approval of the Committee.
- No virement should be made where it would result in over expenditure.

1.15 PROJECT EXTENSION

a. Requests for project extensions must be made in writing by the Project Leaders for approval at least **three (3) months before** the project completion date. The requests for extensions must be accompanied by appropriate supporting evidence.

b. Applications for project extension received after the project completion date will not be considered.

c. The maximum duration of the extension is **six (6) months including the submission of the Final Project Report.**

1.16 NOTIFICATION OF RESULTS

The results of applications will be notified to applicants within **14 working days** after the convening of the quarterly Committee meeting.

1.17 ACCEPTANCE OF OFFER

Applicants must accept or decline the offer within **14 working days after receiving the Notification or Letter of Award.**

1.18 INDUSTRY LINKAGE FUND AGREEMENT

The Project Leaders are required to sign the Industry Linkage Fund Agreement within **thirty (30) working days** upon acceptance of the approved projects, failing which the Committee has the right to revoke the approval.

1.19 INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS

a. Project leader is required to generate IP (e.g. patent, copyright and industrial design) from the funded project.

b. IP generated from research projects under full grant, if any, shall be owned by MRC which will make it available for open access by eligible members of the rubber products industry. This is to ensure the projects carried out will benefit the industry.

c. IP generated from research projects under matching grant, if any, shall be given an exclusivity period between three (3) to five (5) years before it is available for open access.

1.20 PUBLICATIONS

Upon project completion, researchers can publish the results of their projects in local and renowned international publications. Approval from the Committee is required prior to publishing the results.

Note:

- The contribution of MRC as the fund provider must be acknowledged at all times in all forms of publications.
- Collaborator with financial commitment can be a co-author for paper publications while collaborator without financial commitment can be acknowledged in the research paper.
- Researchers are required to submit one (1) copy of all research papers/journal within one (1) month to MRC upon their publication.
- Project leader shall be able to present the research findings in any seminar/conference/workshop as requested by the Committee.
- Project leader is not allowed to publish any data or information from the funded project before its completion to ensure a successful IP filing.

1.21 QUARTERLY FINANCIAL REPORT

Each Project Leader is required to submit to the Committee a Quarterly Financial Report together with the progress report and findings of all approved projects in a digital file (excel format) as in **Appendix III: Table 1.**

Note: All reports are private and confidential. The Committee may conduct an audit check on the amount spent by the researchers, as reported in the Quarterly Financial Report.

1.22 CHANGE OF PROJECT LEADER

If a Project Leader/Team Member intends to resign, retire or move to another organisation, he/she must inform the Committee and recommend suitable replacement within the same institute for approval. The new Project Leader/Team Member must have the necessary expertise and experience to lead the project.

1.23 TRANSFER OF GRANTS BETWEEN ORGANISATIONS

If the project leader wishes to transfer and bring along his/her project to another organisation, it is allowed on condition that both parties agree to it by signing a written agreement. The receiving organisation must be eligible to be an Industry Linkage Fund recipient. The project must be carried out in line with the original scope approved.

If either one party does not agree to the agreement, the Committee will terminate the project and any unspent funding shall be returned to MRC.

Note: All research findings either completed or incomplete project shall belong to MRC, as stipulated in the Industry Linkage Fund Agreement.

1.24 TERMINATION

Projects can be terminated based on the following:

i. Any false reporting by the project leader;

ii. Any misuse of the grant provided;
iii. Non-performance in terms of progress such as incompletion of milestone;
iv. Variation of the scope of the project without getting prior approval from MRC; and
v. No suitable project leader as a replacement for the original recipient institution/organisation in cases as in 1.18 and 1.19.

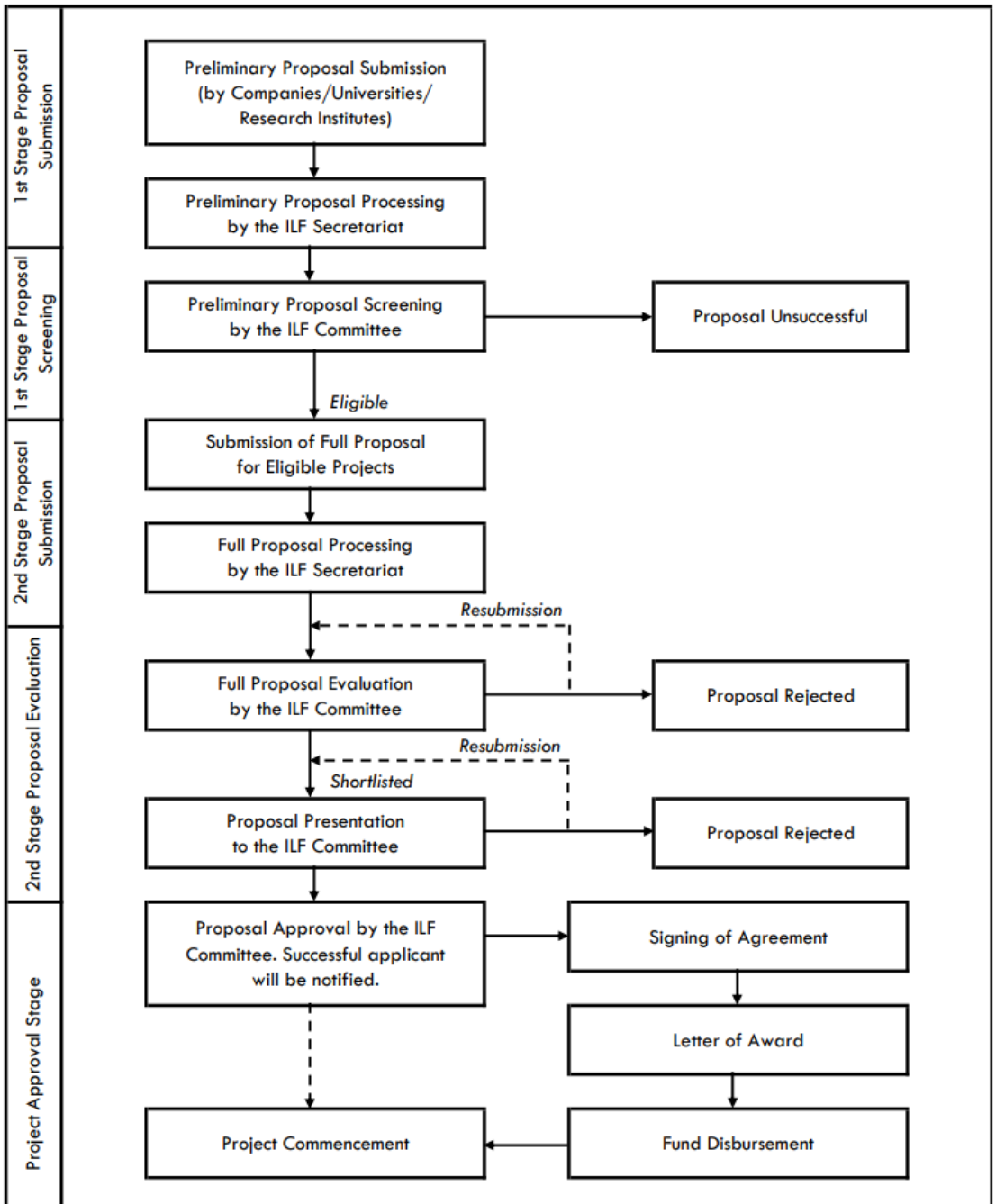
Note: Unspent fund shall be returned to MRC.

CHAPTER 2: PROPOSAL APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION

2.1 INDUSTRY LINKAGE FUND PROCESS FLOW

The project approval process as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: The Project Approval Process



2.2 PROPOSAL APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION

Applicants are only required to submit a "Preliminary Proposal" prior to submitting a "Full Proposal" via the MRC ILF online system (www.myrubbercouncil.com/industrylinkagefund/ilfapplication/).

An applicant first needs to register in order to receive a login name and password, and thus get access to the proposal application for preparing, uploading and submitting a proposal.

Research projects to be submitted by Institutions are required to have a collaboration with an Industry collaborator, and vice versa to be eligible for the funding. The project leader is required to identify the collaborator and specify the role of the collaborator in the application.

Applicants may visit MRC Marketplace wesbite to access the list of rubber products manufacturers (http://www.myrubbercouncil.com/marketplace/index.php) to identify suitable Industry collaborator. The Secretariat of the MRC Industry Linkage Fund may also assist in identifying the collaborator.

All research proposal can be submitted throughout the year.

Contact Details of ILF Secretariat:

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MALAYSIAN RUBBER COUNCIL
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CHAPTER 3: PROJECT EVALUATION

The project evaluation consists of three (3) stages; screening, technical and financial evaluation, and proposal presentation before it is approved by the ILF Committee.

The ILF Committee comprises of a Chairman and Committee members are industry experts appointed by the MRC. However, additional experts, including international peer reviewers can be invited as and when necessary, to assist in the evaluation.

3.1 SCREENING STAGE

- All preliminary proposal submitted to MRC will be screened by the Secretariat before submitting to the Committee to ensure that the project proposals are conforming to the requirements of the Industry Linkage Fund.
- The Committee will study the proposals based on the merits of the research objectives, appropriateness of research approach, proof of concept, the ability of researchers and the cost-effectiveness of the proposal.
- A project proposal will be evaluated based on the following weighted criteria.

No.	Criteria	Weightage
1	Industrial Impact	40%
2	Research Quality	30%
3	Feasibility Study	30%
Total		**100%**

Rating will be given to each criteria based on a scale of 1 to 5:
(1 – very poor; 2 – poor; 3 – average; 4 – good; 5 – excellent)

The criteria for the proposed research are as below.

Industry Impact : Impact to the sectoral/industry from the proposed project
Research Quality : Technical hurdles, previous work done, current ideas to support industrial impact
Feasibility Study : Proof of concept, current research status, cost-benefit analysis

The grades for approval of the project are as below.

60% and above : Project is eligible to proceed to full proposal application
59% and below : Proposal is rejected

3.2 TECHNICAL AND FINANCIAL EVALUATION STAGE

- A full project proposal submitted to MRC will be evaluated in details, technically and financially by the Committee.
- The Committee will assess various technical aspects of the research proposal. It will also ensure the project leader and project team are technically competent, the project costs are fair, and there is the optimal utilisation of available research equipment and infrastructure.
- A project proposal will be evaluated based on the following weighted criteria.

No.	Criteria	Weightage
1	Benefits to the Industry	40%
2	Technical	20%
3	Uniqueness/Innovation	10%
4	Financial/Cost-benefit	10%
5	Capability of Researcher	10%
6	Duration of Project	5%
7	Literature Search	5%
Total		**100%**

Rating will be given to each criteria based on a scale of 1 to 5:
(1 – very poor; 2 – poor; 3 – average; 4 – good; 5 – excellent)

The grades for approval of the project are as below.
70% and above : Proposal is shortlisted for oral presentation. Committee may request for resubmission of improved proposal before final decision.
69% and below : Proposal is rejected.

Note: Shortlisted projects will be invited for presentation to the Committee, as part of the proposal evaluation process.

3.3 PRESENTATION OF PROPOSAL STAGE

The Committee will make a final decision whether or not to approve a proposal upon reviewing the project during the presentation by project leader to the Committee. Any decision made by the Committee is final.

CHAPTER 4: ALLOCATION AND DISBURSEMENT OF FUND

4.1 QUANTUM OF FUNDING

The quantum of each project depends on the proposal received. The grant size for each project shall not be more than RM 300,000.

4.2 DISBURSEMENT OF FUNDING

The fund will be disbursed quarterly and the amount to be disbursed to the institutions is according to the project proposal and the progress of the project and upon approval by the Committee.

The first disbursement will be made to the institutions within one month from the date of the Industry Linkage Fund Agreement between to MRC and the institution.

4.3 INSTITUTIONAL FINANCIAL PROCEDURE

Researchers must abide by all financial rules and regulations of the institutions especially those pertaining to procurement, disbursement, the appointment of research staff and intellectual property rights.

CHAPTER 5: PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

5.1 PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

- All projects must be conducted in accordance with the terms and conditions outlined in the Industry Linkage Fund Agreement and the project's proposal as approved by the Committee.
- The Committee will closely monitor all project to ensure that they are carried out successfully. The project leaders are required to submit project reports for review by the Committee through the ILF Secretariat.
- **Progress Report** must be submitted within two (2) weeks after the end of every quarter of each year. These reports will be used to access the progress of the project. This will take into account of the milestones achieved and the amount of fund already disbursed. It is the project leader's responsibility to ensure that the correct and updated information related to the milestone achievement and expenditure is reported. Any inaccuracy in reporting, delays in the project and failure to submit the progress report by the project leaders are serious omission that will result in the withholding of further fund disbursement or possible termination of the project. Project leader and the collaborator representative are required to attend the interim presentation to present their latest project progress to the Committee.
- **Final Project Report** should be submitted within one (1) month after the project completion date. Project leader and the collaborator representative are required to attend the final presentation upon submitting the final report. All publications must acknowledge MRC's contribution as a fund provider. The Final Project Report requires the following information:

  i. Direct outputs of the project;
  ii. Extent of achievement of the original project objectives;
  iii. Technology transfer and commercialisation approach;
  iv. Benefits of the project, particularly project outputs and endorsement by the industry;
  v. Technical report of the project; and
  vi. Financial report of the project.

  MRC reserves the rights to call for periodic information on progress or to conduct site visits even after the project has been completed.

APPENDIX I

Table 1: Research Priority Areas

No	Research Areas	Priority Areas/Products
1	Latex-based Products	Catheters
		Condoms
		Gloves
		Foam products
		Latex thread
2	Dry Rubber Products*	Automotive components
		Industrial rubber goods
		General rubber goods (e.g. household, sporting goods)
		Engineering rubber goods
		Precured tread liner
		Oil and gas products
3	Automation	Machinery and robotic for process improvement
4	Infrastructure and Construction	Rubber products for the construction industry
5	Solid Waste Reclamation/Management	Incorporation of rubber waste into new products
6	Wastewater treatment	Reducing effluent or heavy metals in wastewater
7	Green and Sustainable Technology	Implementation of new process or materials in rubber products/facility that contribute to the betterment of the environment
8	Energy Saving	Reducing energy consumption in the manufacturing facility
9	Advanced Manufacturing	Innovative method or technology to facilitate the manufacturing process

Note:

- *Excluding inner tubes and footwear.
- All research project must be related to rubber products manufacturing industry.

APPENDIX II

Table 2: CESS Paying Rubber Products

The CESS paying rubber products are categorized according to the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System or HS Codes, as below.

Products HS Code	Description
4007	**Vulcanised rubber thread and cord.**
4008	**Plates, sheets, strips, rods and profile shapes of vulcanised rubber than hard rubber, including:** • Floor tiles and wall tiles • Water stop • Rubber Soling Sheet • Structural bearings, including bridge bearings • Rail Pad
4009	**Tubes, pipes and hoses, of vulcanised rubber other than hard rubber with or without their fittings (for example, joints elbows, flanges)**
4010	**Conveyor or transmission belts or belting of vulcanised rubber**
401290300	**Replaceable tyre treads (pre-cured tread)**
4014	**Hygienic or pharmaceutical articles of vulcanised rubber other than hard rubber with or without fittings of hard rubber, including:** • Sheath contraceptives • Teats for feeding bottles similar articles • Finger stalls • Hot water bottles
4015	**Articles of apparel and clothing accessories (including gloves, mittens and mitts), for all purposes of vulcanised rubber other than hard rubber)**
4016	**Other articles of vulcanised rubber other than hard rubber, including:** • Padding for articles of apparel or clothing accessories • Floor coverings and mats • Eraser tips • Pipe seal rings • Boat or dock fenders • Parts and accessories of vehicles of headings 87.02, 87.03, 87.04, 87.05 or 87.11. Parts and accessories for vehicles of heading 87.12 • Parts and accessories for vehicles of heading 87.13 • Parts and accessories of roto chutes of heading 88.04 • Rubber band • Structural bearings (including bridge bearings) • Rail pad • Rubber rollers • Other inflatable articles
4017	**Hard rubber (for example, ebonite) in all forms, including waste and scrap; articles of hard rubber**

5604	**Rubber thread and cord, textile covered; textile yarn, and strip and the like of heading 54.04 or 54.05, impregnated, coated, covered or sheathed with rubber or plastics.** • Rubber thread and cord, textile covered • Rubber impregnated textile thread
5906	**Rubberised textile fabrics, other than those of heading 59.02., including:** • Adhesive tape of a width not exceeding 20 cm
6506	**Other headgear, whether or not lined or trimmed, including:** • Swimming caps of rubber or of plastics • Other headgear, whether or not lined or trimmed of rubber or of plastics
8544	**Insulated (including enamelled or anodised) wire, cable (including co-axial cable) and other insulated electric conductors, whether or not fitted with connectors; optical fibre cables, made up of individually sheathed fibres, whether or not assembled with electric conductors or fitted with connectors.**
854420100	Natural or synthetic rubber insulated
854430100	Natural or synthetic rubber insulated
854442111	Fitted with connectors: Of a kind used for telecommunications: Telephone and Telegraph (including radio relay) cables: Submarine
854442119	Fitted with connectors: Of a kind used for telecommunications telephone and telegraph cables (including radio relay cables: Other
854442191	Other electric conductors, for a voltage not exceeding 1000V fitted with connectors of a kind used for telecommunications insulated with rubber
854442910	Other electric conductors, for a voltage not exceeding 1000V fitted with connectors of a kind used for telecommunications insulated with rubber
854449111	Other: Of a kind used for telecommunications: Telephone and Telegraph (including radio relay) cables: Submarine
854449120	Other: Of a kind used for telecommunications: Telephone and Telegraph (including radio relay) cables: For voltage not exceeding 80V
854449139	Other: Of a kind used for telecommunications: Telephone and Telegraph (including radio relay) cables: Other
854449191	Other electric conductors, for a voltage not exceeding 1000V fitted with connectors of a kind used for telecommunications insulated with rubber
854449910	Other electric conductors, for a voltage not exceeding 1000V fitted with connectors of a kind used for telecommunications insulated with rubber
854460100	Other electric conductors, for a voltage exceeding 1000V insulated with rubber
900490	**Rubber goggles**
901839100	**Rubber catheters**
9404	**Mattress supports; articles of bedding and similar furnishing (for example, mattresses, quilts, eiderdowns, cushions, pouffes and pillows) fitted with springs, stuffed, or internally fitted with any material or of cellular rubber or plastics, whether or not covered.**
95030094	**Toys of rubber, including balloons**
9506	**Inflatable balls, golf balls, lawn-tennis balls & other rubber balls**

Table 1: Quarterly Expenditure Report

No	Category of Expenditure	Total Amount Approved by ILF Committee (RM)	Total Amount Received by Project Leader (RM)	Balance from Last Quarter (RM), if any*	Details of Expenditure	Amount (RM)	Total Actual Expenditure (RM)	Balance (RM)
1	Wages and Allowance for Temporary							
2	Travels and Transportation							
3	Rentals							
4	Research Materials and Supplies							
5	Minor Modifications and Repairs							
6	Special Services such as Consultation and Sample Testing & Analysis							
7	Prototype Development							
	Total					***Total***		





INDUSTRY LINKAGE FUND SECRETARIAT

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