

Penfabric weaves sustainable way towards brighter future

Penang-based textile arm of Toray Malaysia innovates and exports new fabrics for top international fashion brands

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For Penfabric Malaysia, creating innovations is more than a vital strategy to grow its business. It is also a meaningful way for the integrated textile company to contribute to society in sync with its corporate philosophy. As the textile arm of Toray Malaysia, Penfabric pushes the envelope in research and development to pioneer textile functionalities that could transform everyday life.

Penfabric draws its expertise from the diversified businesses of its mother company, the Japanese conglomerate Toray Industries – a world leader in advanced materials encompassing fibres and textiles, plastics and chemicals, life sciences and information technology-related products, and many more.

“Established in the early 1970s, Penfabric was at the forefront of the industrial revolution of Penang. Four decades later, we are still making a positive impact on the economic growth of Malaysia with our commitment to continuous innovations and sustainable practices,” says Penfabric managing director and Toray Industries senior director Teh Hock Soon.

Today, Penfabric operates four mills in Penang with ample capacity for spinning, weaving, dyeing, printing and finishing processes. Its diverse range of products includes heavyweight, lightweight, yarn-dyed, printed and grey fabrics. The company's export reach spans the United States, Europe, Japan, China, and the rest of the Asian region.

Penfabric was the first company in the world to successfully manufacture pre-cured wrinkle-free polyester/cotton blended fabrics for dress shirts. Over the years, it has forged close collaborations with renowned fashion brands worldwide, notably with PVH, the owner of brands such as Calvin Klein, Tommy Hilfiger, and others. Uniqlo and Marks & Spencer are also the company's well-known customers.

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Teh Hock Soon, managing director, Penfabric, and senior director, Toray Industries

Partnering with Invista – one of the world's largest integrated polymer and fibre producers, Penfabric developed the CORDURA NYCO fabric by blending 75 per cent cotton with 25 per cent of the high-strength Invista T420 nylon 6,6 fibre. Targeted at the global workwear market and especially workers facing harsh working conditions, the CORDURA NYCO fabric features exceptional abrasion resistance and excellent durability, yet has the comfort of cotton-rich fabric. It was a breakthrough that cemented Penfabric's position as a market leader in heavyweight workwear fabric.

True to its pioneering spirit, Penfabric was the world's first integrated textile company accredited with the Sustainable Textile Production certification by OEKO-TEX for eco-friendly practices in 2015. The company has also earned the OEKO-TEX Standard 100 since 1996, ensuring that its products are tested for potentially harmful substances. Together, these two internationally recognised certifications enable Penfabric to display the Made in Green by OEKO-TEX label – reflecting its commitment to product safety and sustainable textile production. Penfabric even produces green fabric from polyethylene terephthalate (PET) resins from recycled flakes of discarded

PET bottles.

Penfabric also provides its clients added value with the one-of-its-kind Penfabric Aquarium. This is an innovation, creativity and fashion hub where Penfabric and its collaborators work to translate ideas into reality. Boasting a fully computerised sample inventory, this state-of-the-art system gives instantaneous access to sample images, fabric specifications, designs and stock availability at the touch of a screen. Obliterating the need to rummage manually through files and warehouses has led to speed and agility in responding to the ever-changing fashion trends.

Kaizen, or “change for the better” in Japanese, is the DNA of Penfabric. Many new products are in the pipeline, such as waterproof laminated fabrics for apparel and non-apparel uses. Penfabric will continue on its trailblazing path, driven by creative innovations and prolific partnerships to discover the infinite possibilities of tomorrow's textiles today.

“We are a team that believes in relationships – with customers, suppliers, employees, communities and even universities. By building on relationships, we establish the most important foundation of our business, which is the human element. Working together as a team, we believe that determination is the thing, impossible is nothing, result is everything,” Teh says.