

Google to invest in digital infrastructure, AI innovation programmes

SAN FRANCISCO: Google yesterday announced a strategic collaboration with the Malaysian government to invest in the country's digital competitiveness, including infrastructure and artificial intelligence (AI) innovation programmes.

The initiative will see both parties getting together to help businesses of all sizes advance their digital competitiveness through skilling programmes, investment in digital infrastructure, responsible AI innovation, and cloud-first policies.

The announcement was made following a meeting between Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and Google president and chief investment officer Ruth Porat, Google Asia-Pacific president Scott Beaumont and Google global vice-president of government affairs and public policy Karan Bhatia.

Also present at the meeting, held on the sidelines of the Asia-

Pacific Economic Cooperation 2023 Summit here were Investment, Trade and Industry Minister Tengku Datuk Seri Zafrul Tengku Abdul Aziz, Google Cloud vice-president and general manager Amit Zavery and Google Southeast Asia head of government affairs and public policy Su Ann Lim.

Anwar said the collaboration was in line with the government's Madani economy framework, which aimed to increase the size of our economic pie, as well as ensure that all stakeholders — particularly small businesses — enjoy the ensuing socio-economic benefits.

"This latest commitment by Google, which is aimed at accelerating local innovation and talent development in the field of AI, will certainly boost the nation's digital competitiveness, in line with the Madani economy framework and the New Industrial Master Plan 2030 (NIMP

2030)," he said.

In a statement following the meeting, Porat said the initiatives were built on Google's investments in Malaysia over the last 12 years.

She said the company's products and programmes supported more than 47,900 jobs in 2022 alone, besides contributing an estimated US\$2.8 billion in economic benefits to local businesses.

"The partnership we are announcing today aligns Google's local mission of advancing the Malaysian government's goal to create a supportive ecosystem for innovation that includes more meaningful and equitable job opportunities.

"To advance these shared goals, we intend to assist Malaysian organisations in addressing real-world challenges using AI, and utilising Google Cloud technologies to rapidly implement solutions for economic

growth and public good," she said.

She added that the collaboration would see upskilling opportunities for 300,000 Malaysians by 2026, especially digital training opportunities for people from all backgrounds.

"Google Cloud, CloudMile, and Trainocate are making five digital learning paths available at no cost.

"These will be accessible through the Go Cloud programme.

"The learning paths consist of online courses to help individuals better apply generative AI, data analytics, and cloud-based productivity tools.

"Those who complete the five learning paths will earn digital skills badges that they can share on their resumes and extended 30-day access to more learning paths at no cost."

The initiative builds on Gemilang, a digital training pro-

gramme that has provided 31,000 Google Career Certificate scholarships to the less fortunate individuals in partnership with educational institutions and non-profit organisations.

"This helps Malaysians earn professional certifications at no cost for entry-level jobs in high-demand fields such as data analytics; IT support; as well as e-commerce and digital marketing."

Meanwhile, Tengku Zafrul said the government welcomed Google's continued contributions, especially through programmes that nurtured skilled talent and helped Malaysian small businesses.

"Apart from supporting the achievement of NIMP 2030's missions, these will also enhance Malaysia's overall global competitiveness to foreign investors.

"We will do our utmost to facilitate Google's planned investments in Malaysia," he said.