

Transforming higher education

UTM hosts nation's first AI faculty

By **REBECCA RAJAENDRAM**
rebeccagr@thestar.com.my

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia's first Faculty of Artificial Intelligence (AI) will lead the way in the integration and teaching of AI throughout the country, says Datuk Seri Dr Zambry Abd Kadir.

The Higher Education Minister said the faculty, located at Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM)'s Kuala Lumpur campus, would be a catalyst for an integrated AI education system.

"Today's event marks a defining moment, showcasing Malaysia's readiness for AI transformation in higher education," he said at the official launch of the faculty held during the Malaysia Artificial Intelligence Nexus programme here yesterday.

He said the rapidly changing technology today was greatly influenced by new environments, including the development of AI in various ecosystems.

To keep up, he said the country's education system must be ready to use AI as its "tool".

It took four months for the faculty to come to life, Zambry said,

adding that the curriculum was pioneered by local scholars who are also internationally recognised experts. >

During the launch, he also announced the setting up of the Malaysia AI Consortium (MAIC), which consists of public and private universities in Malaysia, each with its specific focus area.

He said AI development in the country would involve an entire related ecosystem, including private institutions of higher education, government and private agencies as well as industries.

"We stand prepared to collaborate with any agencies to achieve our objectives in AI technology," he added.

While acknowledging that "AI poses the greatest challenge of the 21st century", Zambry said that there were also opportunities awaiting.

"The integration of AI into various sectors in Malaysia, spanning education, social systems, agriculture, food security, the digital economy, and tackling complex challenges like climate change, underscores our nation's commitment to innovation and progress."

Through a comprehensive governmental approach, he said Malaysia is determined to lead the global AI agenda and establish itself as a prominent hub for innovation, through a comprehensive governmental approach.

The national economy would also be transformed and integrated with AI to drive sustainable and competitive growth, Zambry added.

During his welcoming speech, UTM vice-chancellor Prof Datuk Dr Ahmad Fauzi Ismail said they were committed to ensuring the nation's AI agenda was carried out with "full accountability, responsibility and privilege".

"A sustainable and resilient AI ecosystem is important in making the AI agenda successful in Malaysia, including the creation and application of AI," he added.

Prime Minister. Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim had presented an appointment letter to UTM for the setting up of MAIC and launched the AI Talent Roadmap 2024-2030.

Anwar also witnessed the exchange of Letter of Intent between the Higher Education Ministry and Nvidia.



Charting a new course: Anwar with Zambry (left) and Japanese ambassador to Malaysia Takahashi Katsuhiko (second left) visiting a booth at the launch of the Malaysia Artificial Intelligence Nexus programme at the World Trade Centre Kuala Lumpur. - Bernama