

## KERATAN AKHBAR

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### Innovation-based growth model the key



PETALING JAYA: The government aims to implement an ecosystem that is supportive of an innovation-based growth model.

Stressing on the importance of innovation, Economy Minister Rafizi Ramli hinted that some initiatives will be revealed in the coming weeks.

“We have already started hitting the ground running. In a few weeks’ time, our ministry will announce a series of National Hackathons that will be televised nationwide, so that we can enlarge the pool of innovative Malaysians, and sensitise ourselves to the routine of problem solving,” he said during his keynote address at the UK-Malaysia Digital Innovation Programme Demo Day.

Being the first of its kind in the country, the programme saw 10 net-zero startups from the UK pitch their technologies for up to US\$1mil (RM4.49mil) in investments and entry into the Sunway Innovation Labs (Sunway iLabs) Net Zero Lab, an accelerator programme for green startups.

The programme is held in partnership with Sunway iLabs (the innovation arm of Sunway Group), MyDigital Corp and the Malaysia Digital Economy Corp, and delivered by IoT Tribe.

Commenting on the programme, Rafizi said startup companies from the UK can expose Malaysia to global best practices and create healthy competition and pressure for local firms to innovate.

He said young Malaysians would also see for themselves how these startups can innovate and make a difference.

“This would give them the necessary self-confidence and a sense of possibility to strike out on their own,” he noted.

Meanwhile, British deputy high commissioner to Malaysia David Wallace said that by connecting UK digital tech businesses with leading Malaysian corporates and aggregating complementary strengths and resources, the programme was a catalyst for commercial partnerships and investments.

“The UK’s bilateral trade with Malaysia totals £5.9bil (RM32.31bil), with digital, technology and cyber being the fastest growth sector,” he said at the event.

Rafizi pointed out that the World Bank’s findings saw only 10.5% of Malaysian firms engage in research and development and an even lower 3.5% had introduced new products in the last three years.

“Our patent applications, a marker for innovation, lag behind our peers and our rate of commercialising research and development remains stagnant,” Rafizi said.

In relation to the commitment towards an open government, Rafizi explained the role of an open data platform, which the government has been working on.

He said the open data platform is where government ministries and agencies pool their data resources onto a central platform that could allow anyone to gain real-time insights – from traffic conditions, number of houses in a locality, temperature deviations and rainfalls to international trade volumes – presented in ways that are easy to use for coders, developers and any curious Malaysian.

“Hopefully, this builds accountability on the federal government agencies and departments because our performance, achievements, will be up for scrutiny,” he told reporters on the sidelines.

On the legislative acts that prohibit sharing of data with the public, Rafizi said: “As part of a commitment for an open government approach, we will have to harmonise all this to allow more data to be shared across ministries and agencies.”

Rafizi also said that an open data platform encouraged innovation among the public, as data is believed to be the key.

“The more granular data you have, the more insights that the public and the private sector can have access to,” he noted.