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Plus partners MaGIC to explore building smart highways



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The project will accelerate innovative approaches in carrying out highway maintenance work through technology

by ANIS HAZIM / pic Source: MOSTI

PLUS Malaysia Bhd has inked a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Malaysian Global Innovation and Creativity Centre (MaGIC), which is the lead secretariat of the National Technology and Innovation Sandbox (NTIS), to build a pilot project of Smart Highway Sandbox.

Science, Technology and Innovation Minister Datuk Seri Dr Adham Baba said that the Smart Highway Sandbox will accelerate innovative approaches in carrying out highway maintenance work through technology.

“Based on data from the Global Smart Highway Market 2021, the global smart highway is estimated to be worth US\$19.89 billion (RM84.13 billion) in 2021 and is expected to grow around 18% in 2021 to 2026,” said Dr Adham at the MoU signing ceremony yesterday.

He noted that the smart highways are a medium of innovation as they enable the integration of technology with road networks such as a combination of various Internet of Things devices to improve transport efficiency, the safety of drivers and pedestrians, and the use of clean energy to promote sustainability.

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“Therefore, Malaysia should take this opportunity to explore new technology, especially by local talents who can improve the safety and comfort of highway users,” he said.

According to him, the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (Mosti) through NTIS will facilitate the process to enable innovators and start-ups to test products and solutions in an actual safe environment.

“Nearly 10% of the 139 applications approved under the NTIS programme are companies that are ready to test technological proto-types in the smart city and transportation sectors,” he added.

Currently, the technology of detecting traffic congestion using artificial intelligence (AI) has been approved by the Melaka Public Works Department for the testing process at Jalan Universiti Teknikal Malaysia and Jalan Kolej Yayasan Saad, Melaka.

“Recently, some of the companies have been given the opportunity to participate in collaborative programmes with NTIS strategic partners, aligning their respective innovations with the Sustainable Development Goals to contribute to a sustainable future,” said Dr Adham.

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Meanwhile, Plus COO Datuk Zakaria Ahmad Zabidi said that this partnership is the best platform to position Plus as the leader of IR4.0 in highway management.

“This will also enhance our key value especially in intensifying customer safety and comfort features,” Zakaria said.

He said that the main goal of this collaboration is to improve automated solutions for the initial inspection and monitoring of Plus highway assets.

“It also aims to create a comprehensive reporting and data analysis system as well as involving various digital systems,” he noted.

He said that the Smart Highway Sandbox project will also support the government’s aspiration to produce more competitive local companies by providing a field for research and development as well as innovation.

“Therefore, local companies and innovators will indirectly have the opportunity to test prototypes of the technology in a real environment through the Plus highway network

before entering the market and apply them to other highways in Malaysia,” he added.

At the same time, Plus has begun to formulate and introduce its Smart Technology Five Year plan to ensure that all Plus “citizens” are prepared to manage the latest technology.

“This is in line with our plans to increase investment to achieve optimal levels of innovation in the highway industry including using video analysis and AI technology and machine learning,” he further said.