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Universiti Teknikal Malaysia Melaka develops app to help people with autism generate income

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UTEM vice-chancellor Prof Massila Kamalrudin said through the programme, autistic children can use their drawing style to produce more beautiful paintings. — Thomson Reuters Foundation pic

MELAKA, May 13 — Universiti Teknikal Malaysia Melaka (UTeM) has developed the DeepAI application aimed at helping people with autism generate their income.

UTEM vice-chancellor Prof Massila Kamalrudin said the move was in line with the university's high level of expertise in the latest digital technology and its role as an institution of excellence in research and innovation to participate in helping communities in need.

“UTEM has successfully developed a technology known as the DeepAI application which is artificial intelligence (AI) capable of producing artwork automatically using a variety of styles.

“Through the programme, autistic children can use their drawing style to produce more beautiful paintings,” she said in a statement here today.

According to Massila, the project was developed by a group of professors and lecturers headed by Prof Goh Ong Sing with Yogan Jaya Kumar, Zuraini Othman, Ngo Hea Choon and Muhammad Helmy Emran from the Faculty of Information and Communication Technology, and Prof Effendi Mohamad from the Faculty of Manufacturing Engineering as well as Mohd Shamsuri Md Saad from the university’s Institute of Technology Management and Entrepreneurship.

Meanwhile, Ong Sin said the project was the university’s manifestation of its social responsibility, adding that he hoped it could help disabled people, especially autistic children to further develop their artistic talents.

“Normally an autistic child will take between one and three weeks to produce an artwork but with the help of DeepAI, they can produce a drawing in just one day.

“We hope this application will make it easier for them to produce their artwork and sell it to a wider market for them to generate income.”

He said the initiative had also received recognition and support from the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (Mosti) together with Yayasan Inovasi Malaysia (YIM) through The Malaysia Social Innovation Programme (MyIS).

“Presently, UTeM is working with the Melaka and Negri Sembilan special education sector as well as with Persatuan Kanner Melaka to identify and train autistic children and people with disabilities who are interested and have the talent for painting,” he said. — Bernama