



PRESS RELEASE

MINISTRY OF SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

ASEAN STARTUP YEAR 2025: MALAYSIA MARKS A MILESTONE IN REGIONAL INNOVATION MOMENTUM

CYBERJAYA, 22 April 2025 – The Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (MOSTI) through Cradle Fund Sdn Bhd (Cradle), today reaffirmed its commitment to regional innovation by marking the progression of ASEAN Startup Year 2025 at Cradle's MYStartup NXT micro-conference. First announced in late 2024, this year-long initiative is a pivotal chapter in ASEAN's evolving role as a globally significant innovation bloc.

"ASEAN Startup Year 2025 is not a beginning – it is the next wave of a journey we started since 2024," said **YB Tuan Chang Lih Kang, Minister of MOSTI**. "From the December announcement of the Startup ASEAN platform development to today, Malaysia has laid the groundwork to empower entrepreneurs, connect ecosystems, and future-proof ASEAN's economic resilience through innovation."

"The emergence of new trade partnerships among economic blocs is essential for upholding the rule of law and maintaining international trade and order, especially during times of adversity. ASEAN, with its significant economic contributions and strategic engagement, plays a pivotal role in this context. Considering ongoing shifts in global trade dynamics, ASEAN and its member states have unique opportunities to enhance regional cooperation, diversify trade partners, promote intra-ASEAN trade, invest in technology and innovation, and engage in strategic diplomacy through science, technology and innovation. These efforts, coupled with initiatives like the ASEAN Startup Year 2025, will help mitigate the potential impact of trade disruptions and foster stable, mutually beneficial trade relations with all global partners," he added.

The regional effort builds on the ASEAN 2025 vision, recognizing startups as catalysts for cross-border collaboration, digital growth, and socioeconomic development. Since its early inception, the ASEAN Startup Initiative has gained

traction with stakeholders across all 10 member states, reflecting the region's shared ambition for inclusive, tech-driven growth.

Laying the Foundations for ASEAN's Startup Future

Malaysia continues to strengthen its leadership in the regional innovation landscape. In early April, the country played host to key regional engagements, including the ASEAN Finance Ministers' and Central Bank Governors' Meeting (AFMGM) and the ASEAN+3 Finance and Central Bank Deputies Meeting (AFCDM+3). Riding on this momentum, Malaysia is now gearing up for the official launch of Startup ASEAN platform and the hosting of the inaugural Startup ASEAN Summit.

The journey began in December 2024, when MOSTI and Cradle announced the development of the Startup ASEAN platform (www.startup-asean.org). Designed to empower entrepreneurs, connect innovators, and foster a thriving ecosystem that drives regional growth and innovation. This laid the first brick in a multi-phase rollout designed to strengthen ASEAN's innovation connectivity through 2026.

In the first quarter of 2025, Malaysia further convened stakeholders to align on flagship startup initiatives and coordinated rollouts. Among them:

- Lining up regional startup competitions in partnership with China (CAIEC) and South Korea (AI Startup Challenge)
- Initiating preparations for a Cradle flagship event in conjunction with Startup ASEAN Summit, poised to be one of the region's innovation gatherings.

What Lies Ahead: A Region on the Rise

ASEAN Startup Year 2025 will continue to scale throughout the year, with critical milestones ahead. Across the region, all ten ASEAN Member States (AMS) have been actively championing innovation and entrepreneurship through various national-level initiatives. From high-impact summits and startup awards to hackathons, incubator conferences, and roadshows, these events reflect the region's shared commitment to nurturing a vibrant ecosystem.

Leveraging the spirit of ASEAN Malaysia 2025, which likely emphasises themes of digital transformation, economic integration, and regional resilience, AMS Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) programmes can enhance Startup ASEAN by fueling it with innovative solutions, skilled talent, and research outcomes crucial for a digitally driven and interconnected economy. Simultaneously, Startup ASEAN provides STI initiatives with a vital platform for commercialising research, attracting investment, and fostering cross-border collaboration, thereby contributing directly to ASEAN's shared vision of a prosperous, innovative, and sustainable future.

H.E. Dr. Kao Kim Hourn, Secretary-General of ASEAN, praised Malaysia's regional leadership:

"ASEAN's strength lies in unity and innovation. Malaysia's effort through MOSTI and Cradle are shaping a connected ecosystem where ideas, talent, and capital flow freely across borders is commendable and a very kickoff. ASEAN Startup Year embodies this vision."

Norman Matthieu Vanhaecke, Group CEO of Cradle, added:

“We are building more than just platforms – we are shaping a region where startups can thrive collectively. ASEAN Startup Year is a rallying call for collaboration, resilience, and global ambition. In a world increasingly shaped by shifting geopolitical currents- from emerging technologies to trade realignments like the recent tariff moves – ASEAN must rise with a unified front.

“Cradle, through the MYStartup Single Window platform and ASEAN Startup Initiative, is turning regional goals into real opportunities – connecting founders, investors, and markets across borders. For Malaysian startups, this unlocks access to a larger playing field – from funding and partnerships to new markets. We’re proud to drive this vision forward and ensure our local startups don’t just participate but lead on the global innovation stage,” continued Norman.

MYStartup Annual Report 2023/2024: Local Roots to Global Waves

Also unveiled today was the MYStartup Annual Report 2023/2024, which details Malaysia’s continued rise as a startup nation. Highlights include:

- Over **4,300 startups onboarded, 17,000 individuals supported, and RM100+ million in investment secured**
- Kuala Lumpur now ranks among the **Top 21 - 30 Emerging Global Ecosystems**, valued at **over RM220 billion**
- Over **5,700 tech talents** nurtured in collaboration with universities and corporate partners
- Strong ASEAN linkages reaffirming Malaysia’s role as a **launchpad for regional growth**.

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Prepared by

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***Additional information can be found in the Media Kit.**