

PRESS RELEASE
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**WINNERS OF THE KOREA - ASEAN AI DEVELOPMENT & STARTUP
COMPETITION 2025 ANNOUNCED AT AI YOUTH FESTA IN KUALA LUMPUR**

MALAYSIA, 4 November 2025 – The Korea–ASEAN AI Development & Startup Competition 2025 (AI Youth Festa) concluded in Kuala Lumpur with the announcement of the top three winning startups, marking a key milestone in advancing regional collaboration and sustainable digital innovation across ASEAN and the Republic of Korea.

Organised under the Korea-ASEAN Digital Innovation Flagship Project (KADIF), the competition was jointly implemented by the National IT Industry Promotion Agency of Korea (NIPA), the ASEAN Secretariat, and Cradle Fund Sdn. Bhd. (Cradle) under the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (MOSTI) of Malaysia. The competition is funded by the ASEAN-Korea Cooperation Fund through the Government of the Republic of Korea.

The initiative reflects the shared aspiration of ASEAN and Korea to foster inclusive growth, promote technology-driven entrepreneurship and advance the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through responsible use of artificial intelligence.

The winners were selected from among 22 finalists representing 11 nations, following an intensive eight-week acceleration programme led by Y&ARCHER, which provided mentorship, investor engagement, and business development support. The final stage culminated in a live pitching competition during the Startup ASEAN Summit, held from 3–5 November 2025 in Kuala Lumpur.

Placement	Startup	Country	Highlight
1st Place	Atlas Robotics Pte. Ltd.	Singapore	Recognised for exceptional innovation in autonomous robotics and measurable impact in advancing sustainable logistics and automation.
2nd Place	Athletes For Athletes Solutions Sdn. Bhd. (AFA)	Malaysia	Commended for strong market potential and contribution to the sports tech ecosystem through AI-driven community engagement.
3rd Place	Treasurer	Republic of Korea	Acknowledged for creative application of AI in fintech, enabling fractional investments in high-value collectibles.

Yeo Seung-bae, Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to Malaysia, said, “During last week’s ASEAN-Korea Summit and the Korea-Malaysia Summit, President Lee Jae-myung underscored the importance of big data and cybersecurity, and reaffirmed Korea’s commitment to strengthening cooperation in the digital and AI sectors.

“The Korean Government will not only enhance government-to-government collaboration, but will also continue to support meaningful, people-centred exchanges such as this startup-driven AI Youth Festa, ensuring that the outcomes of Korea-ASEAN cooperation are felt by our people in tangible and practical ways,” he added.

Norman Matthieu Vanhaecke, Group Chief Executive Officer of Cradle, said, “As Malaysia leads the ASEAN Chairmanship in 2025, we are honoured to co-implement this initiative that bridges nations through innovation. Cradle’s role under MOSTI reflects our continued commitment to nurturing early-stage founders, empowering AI startups, and supporting regional partnerships that strengthen ASEAN’s innovation ecosystem and advance the Sustainable Development Goals.”

“The AI Youth Festa has demonstrated the strength of collaboration between Korea and ASEAN in driving meaningful digital transformation,” said **Mr. Sungwoo Shin, Project Manager of NIPA**. “The winning startups embody our collective vision of harnessing AI to solve shared challenges, improve quality of life and build a more connected, sustainable region,” he added.

Through AI Youth Festa 2025, ASEAN and Korea reaffirmed their commitment to deepening digital collaboration under the Plan of Action to implement the ASEAN-Republic of Korea Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (2026-2030) and the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP). The competition served as a dynamic platform for young entrepreneurs to exchange ideas, attract investment, and co-develop AI solutions addressing key regional priorities including education, health, sustainability, and economic resilience.

The event drew participation from investors, industry leaders, and policymakers across the region, establishing AI Youth Festa 2025 as a flagship collaboration under Malaysia’s ASEAN leadership. Beyond the competition, the initiative strengthened trust and cooperation between Korea and ASEAN, advancing a shared digital agenda grounded in sustainability, innovation, and inclusivity.

Building on the success of AI Youth Festa 2025, Cradle and its partners will continue to explore follow-up initiatives under the ASEAN Startup Initiative (ASI), expanding access to funding, market connectivity and capacity-building opportunities for startups across the region via the Startup ASEAN platform: <https://startup-asean.org/>

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About Cradle Fund Sdn Bhd

Cradle Fund Sdn. Bhd. (Cradle) is Malaysia's focal agency for early-stage startups, operating under the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (MOSTI). Since its establishment in 2003 under the Ministry of Finance (MOF), Cradle has funded over 1,100 tech startups, achieving the highest commercialisation rate among government grants. Cradle develops and operates MYStartup, Malaysia's single window platform for startup funding, capacity building advisory, and market access. It also manages CIP Spark and CIP Sprint, grant programmes supporting early-stage idea development and commercialisation. As a key driver of Malaysia's technology and innovation startup ecosystem, Cradle continues to foster innovation and entrepreneurship, strengthening the country's position as a regional startup hub.

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