

TAR UC Invests in Big Data, AI and Esports



Battleground: A TAR UC student taking part in the first esports game at the Hero Esports Arena.

WITH two newly launched facilities, students at Tunku Abdul Rahman University College (TAR UC) will be further empowered to gain a learning experience that goes beyond academic knowledge and skills.

Set to nurture future digital talents, the Centre of Excellence (CoE) for Big Data Analytics (BDA) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the Hero Esports Arena will also strengthen the institution's digital capabilities.

The CoE – a tripartite collaboration between Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation (MDEC), the Premier Digital Tech Institution (PDTI) and industry – aims to catalyse research activities related to big data and AI.

Equipped with 25 high-end workstations which are able to perform data processing and data analytics, and run AI algorithms, the CoE has organised various activities and events since its inception in 2020.

These included five research projects on the use of BDA or AI in crop disease detection, building inspection, commercial decision-making, portfolio risk analysis, guided learning, social media insight extraction and social distancing; two international conferences; and four workshops on data analytics.

It has also obtained five research grants, as well as offered two micro-credential courses in AI and an introduction to data science.

To date, the CoE has provided close to 80 internship placements in the fields of BDA or AI and has trained more than 500 students from TAR UC and other PDTIs.

In his welcoming speech at the launch held on Jan 12, TAR UC president Prof Dr Lee Sze Wei said the CoE is an addition to the institution's effort to build a research network that interconnects all research facilities in its Kuala Lumpur main campus and its branch campuses nationwide to support all research activities.

MDEC chief digital skills and jobs officer Dr Sumitra Devi Govinda Nair, who was present to officiate the launch, said the CoE is meant as a platform to bring institutions and industries together, and make it easier for industries to introduce more immersive and hands-on learning to students and the community.

She also commended TAR UC for its strategic initiatives in further developing esports.

"It's really good to see the CoE, which we have been looking forward to materialising, and it is fantastic to see TAR UC taking a lead in the area of esports, as well," she said.

As the only higher education institution in Malaysia to have an esports arena located on campus, TAR UC is in a unique position to organise esports tournaments and leagues, as well as extend invitations to other esports teams.

Sumitra Devi said esports in today's world have evolved from just playing games. "Now, there is a whole value chain of job opportunities surrounding the esports industry, from developers to shoutcasters. I am excited to see what comes out of the esports arena and how we can bring both the CoE and esports to even greater heights," she said.

Prof Lee said aside from focusing on research and academics, TAR UC's Beyond Education philosophy aims to provide students with a learning experience that stretches beyond a traditional classroom setting.

"With the Hero Esports Arena, we are able to provide students with an avenue to nurture and enhance their skills and talents, and also provide them with real-life exposure in the field of esports," he said.