



Sunway College e-Bulletin

August 2025

Dear Colleagues and Partners

We are pleased to share with you the latest e-Bulletin for Sunway College.

This edition of the e-Bulletin highlights various community happenings, including the Australian Matriculation students' moon-viewing event, Sunway Diploma Studies' Ejen Ali the Movie 2 behind-the-scenes session, and Sunway College Johor Bahru's business showcase.

It also celebrates the partnerships and achievements of Sunway College students, such as the Sunway College & STYLO graduation showcase in collaboration with McLaren Kuala Lumpur, A-Level student Lim Hung's bronze medal at the Rubik's WCA World Championship, and Chuah Jia Herng's bronze medal at the International Mathematical Olympiad.

Moreover, this edition features a piece by Victoria University @ Sunway's Dr Jason Cheok and Senior Lecturer Wong Wai Leong on timeless human skills, in conjunction with World Youth Skills Day.

Please help to share the news of the great activities and achievements happening at our College, to your local and international associates, colleagues, friends and family members.

The e-Bulletin runs bi-monthly and alternates between the University and the College.

#MostHappeningCampus

High Fashion in the Fast Lane: Sunway College Debuts Fashion Showcase at McLaren Kuala Lumpur

29 July 2025

Sunway College & STYLO and McLaren Kuala Lumpur have joined forces for Malaysia's first-ever student fashion showcase set inside a luxury supercar showroom.



Source: Provided to WOB

Held at the prestigious McLaren Kuala Lumpur showroom, the event unveiled the creative visions of graduating students from Sunway College's Diploma in Fashion Design Technology programme, with each collection reflecting a unique and personal design journey.

Named 'XENITH' to symbolise the pinnacle of achievement, the event redefined the space as a canvas for expressive and experimental fashion.

The fashion show was graced by the presence of Tan Sri Dato' Seri Sir Dr. Jeffrey Cheah KBE AO, Founder and Chairman of Sunway Group, and attended by Malaysian actress Cristina Stockstill, fashion designers Dickson Lim and Masyadi Mansoor, renowned fashion photographers, and representatives from LVMH Malaysia, Padini Group, Miroza Group, Bonia Group, among other prominent industry leaders.

"Partnering with Sunway Education for this unique graduation showcase reflects our shared values of innovation, craftsmanship, and boundary-pushing creativity. Just as McLaren represents precision and performance in automotive design, these young talents embody that same spirit in fashion," says Marcus Chye, Dealer Principal of McLaren Kuala Lumpur.

Augustine Wong, Director of Programme of Fashion Design Technology Studies, remarks: "The inaugural Diploma in Fashion Design Technology Graduation Fashion Show has set a

remarkable benchmark for our graduates, highlighting not only their innovation and craftsmanship but also the calibre of fashion education at Sunway College."

"This milestone was further elevated through our collaboration with world-class brands such as Le Cordon Bleu and McLaren," he adds.

The event was made even more indulgent with Sunway Le Cordon Bleu as the official culinary partner, adding a refined culinary dimension to the evening.

"We are delighted to support this visionary event that celebrates creativity and precision, values that mirror our own," says Ming Ho, Senior General Manager of Sunway Le Cordon Bleu.

"It is inspiring to see young talents express their passion on such a fierce platform."



Source: Provided to WOB

Student Suman Raj was honoured with the Sir Jeffrey Cheah Visionary Award in Fashion Design Excellence for his collection, which paid tribute to his Indian heritage through culturally inspired designs that reflected his roots.

Student Wyona Soon was named Valedictorian in recognition of her exceptional achievements and a standout collection that boldly fused the rebellious spirit of punk with the elegance of Rococo style.

The showcase marks a defining moment for the Malaysian creative industry by spotlighting homegrown talent on a contemporary platform.

Timeless Skills for a Changing World

By Business Today 10 July 2025

By Wong Wai Leong and Dr Jason Cheok Boon Chuan



Every year, as graduation draws near, there is a familiar pattern where bright and capable students are filled with anxiety about stepping into the corporate world. This is understandable as we live in a time where the pace of change is dizzying. Artificial intelligence, robotics, and automation are advancing rapidly, and headlines constantly warn about job displacement and technological disruption.

With decades of experience across both industry and education, it has become clear that while tools and platforms continue to evolve, the human foundations of success remain constant. In conjunction with World Youth Skills Day, three essential skills are consistently emphasised for students to carry with them regardless of the path they pursue.

Many of life's challenges, particularly in the workplace, stem not from technology, but from interpersonal relationships. At the core of every effective relationship is trust. Whether in interaction with supervisors, colleagues, or subordinates, trust plays a critical role in shaping long-term success. It is not built overnight, but rather, cultivated through consistency, dependability, and integrity. Individuals who approach every task, no matter how small, with earnestness, responsibility, and a commitment to keeping their word, are far more likely to gain the confidence of those around them.

In a culture that often celebrates the idea of "faking it till you make it," a more enduring principle is to under-promise and over-deliver. Let actions speak louder than aspirations.

Ultimately, a reputation for trustworthiness opens more doors than any technical skill alone ever could.

In today's era of lifelong learning, it is no longer sufficient to acquire new knowledge alone. Equally important is the ability to unlearn outdated assumptions and relearn with a fresh perspective.

This is especially relevant in a world where yesterday's information can quickly become obsolete. Remaining relevant is not about chasing every new trend, but about fostering curiosity, maintaining humility, and recognising when it is time to let go of what no longer applies.

While the process of learning, unlearning, and relearning can be challenging, it is essential. This adaptability is what distinguishes those who merely keep up from those who truly thrive in a rapidly changing world.

Success is not a race, and each of us has our own escalator. Everyone follows their own path, and some may advance quickly, while others take more time to find their footing. Both are valid.

The real danger arises when individuals compare themselves to others, allowing impatience and self-doubt to erode their confidence. True contentment lies not in comparison, but in consistent progress. Moving forward with integrity and a clear sense of personal values is what defines meaningful growth.

Each generation entering the workforce faces its own set of uncertainties, and the current one is no exception. Yet, today's youth are equally, if not better, equipped and capable to navigate the challenges of a rapidly evolving world.

While external conditions will continue to shift, the core principles of success remain unchanged. Building trust, embracing continuous learning, and exercising patience are not merely survival tactics—they form the foundation of a meaningful and fulfilling career.

Ultimately, no matter how much the external world transforms, it is the inner values that continue to hold lasting significance.

Wong Wai Leong is a Senior Lecturer of the Victoria University Undergraduate Programme at Sunway College, and Dr Jason Cheok Boon Chuan is the Director of the Victoria University Undergraduate Programme at Sunway College.

Sunway College JB Students Turn Knowledge into Real World Action

It was not a typical day on campus. Instead of attending lectures and tutorials, over 500 students from the Business Diploma programmes at Sunway College Johor Bahru gathered under one roof for a major student-led showcase proving that learning does not just happen in the classroom.

Students from the Accounting, Marketing and Management clusters stepped up to demonstrate what they had been working on. The showcase provided an opportunity for students to share their work with peers which doubled up as an opportunity to apply learning into real-world business cases. Embracing Goal #4 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (Quality Education), the activity aimed at promoting inclusive, equitable education and lifelong learning opportunities for all.

The main objective of this business showcase was to provide first- and second-year students with a platform where they could demonstrate their understanding through discovery, innovation and an entrepreneurial mindset, offering them the experience of communicating their ideas to lecturers and peers.

Each team was evaluated based on their visual displays, communication skills, subject matter knowledge and the overall quality of their presentation. Students pushed their boundaries of creativity, with some setting up elaborate booths, giving out freebies to visitors and even featuring a mascot!

After a rigorous selection process, the winning teams were chosen from each cluster (Accounting, Marketing and Management). Deputy Principal of Sunway College JB, Ms Ong Mei Mei, accompanied by the Head of Programme, Ms Leong Mei Kuen officiated the event and presented the prizes.

Working behind the scenes were senior lecturers Ms Phan Pui San and Mr Jeffery Ho Vui Shing who, together with a dedicated team of lecturers coordinated the entire event. Their combined efforts ensured that the day went on smoothly - no small feat for a showcase of this scale!

“One particularly memorable moment was seeing all students gathered in one space, cheering on their peers. We often teach students to prepare for the real world. This showcase gave them a glimpse of what this would look like, and the students certainly rose to the challenge,” explained Ms Phan Pui San.

In the end, what stood out wasn’t merely the students’ projects and presentations but the underlying passion behind the effort. We congratulate all winning teams for their hard-earned success and bringing ideas to life. It could not have been easy, but as the saying goes, “The harder you work for something, the greater you will feel when you achieve it.”





From Summer Camp to the World Stage: A-Level Student, Chuah Jia Herng's Mathematical Journey in International Mathematical Olympiad (IMO) 2025
29 July 2025



Chuah Jia Herng, fourth from left.

When most students were enjoying a well-deserved break, Chuah Jia Herng, a Sunway A-Level student from the July 2024 intake, was deep in the world of numbers, patterns, and logic. His summer was spent at a prestigious mathematics camp in China, where he immersed himself in advanced problem-solving and collaborative learning with peers from across Asia. But that was just the beginning.

Jia Herng's dedication and talent earned him a coveted spot on Malaysia's national team for the International Mathematical Olympiad (IMO) 2025, the world's most renowned mathematics competition for pre-university students. Held this year in Australia, the IMO brought together brilliant young minds from over 100 countries, each vying to solve some of the most challenging mathematical problems imaginable. And Jia Herng didn't just participate; he excelled.

We are thrilled to announce that Chuah Jia Herng has won a Bronze Medal at the IMO 2025. This achievement is a reflection of his perseverance, intellectual curiosity, and the countless hours he has devoted to mastering the art of mathematics. His journey from a summer camp in China to standing among the world's top young mathematicians is nothing short of inspiring. It is a story of passion, grit, and the pursuit of excellence—qualities we hope to nurture in every student.

Congratulations, Jia Herng. You have made your mark on the global stage, and we couldn't be prouder.

**Nurturing Talent and Building Connections: July Snapshots from Sunway TES College JB
Johor Talent Development Council @ Renggam, Johor
25 July 2025**



The Sunway TES College Johor Bahru team had the wonderful opportunity to visit the Tunku Mahkota Ismail Youth Centre (TMIYC) in Renggam, where they engaged with the local community and enthusiastic students. The visit provided a meaningful platform for connection and dialogue, allowing attendees to share insights and better understand the students' aspirations. The team looks forward to more collaborations and initiatives that support youth development.

Enrolment and Orientation Day



Sunway TES College Johor Bahru warmly welcomed new ACCA FIA and CFAB students during Orientation Day. The session featured an informative briefing on academic matters, hostel arrangements, and key student support services. To help students connect and feel at ease, a

fun and engaging ice-breaking session was also conducted by our dedicated student volunteers. It was a fantastic start to their journey at Sunway TES College JB.

Johor Talent Development Council @ Kluang, Johor



Sunway TES College Johor Bahru participated in the Johor Talent Development Council's roadshow in Kluang to promote the college's programmes. At the booth, the team shared details about Yayasan Peneraju's sponsorship opportunities, highlighting how the organisation supports students in their academic and professional pursuits. The event successfully raised awareness among local youth about available funding and educational development pathways.

Gempur Gemilang



Sunway TES College Johor Bahru had the pleasure of hosting students from SMK Kompleks Sultan Abu Bakar and SMK Tanjung Adang. During their visit, students were introduced to the campus facilities and provided with detailed information about the college's programmes and study pathways. It was a valuable opportunity to inspire and guide these students as they explore their future educational options.

Sunway Students Gain Real-World Insight Through Ajinomoto Factory Visit

25 July 2025



Students from Sunway College's Diploma in Accounting programme recently took part in an educational visit to Ajinomoto (Malaysia) Berhad, gaining practical exposure to real-world business operations in a manufacturing setting.

The visit was organised as part of the students' experiential learning initiative to help bridge academic theory with industry practices. Hosted at Ajinomoto's manufacturing facility in Bandar Baru Enstek, Negeri Sembilan, the programme offered students an inside look into one of Malaysia's leading food production companies.



During the visit, students toured Ajinomoto's Visitor Gallery and production floor, where they observed the manufacturing process of food seasonings and related products. The hands-on experience offered insights into how core accounting concepts such as cost management, inventory control, budgeting, and quality assurance are applied in a real business environment.

"Seeing the production flow in action made it easier to understand how what we learn in class is actually used in business," said one student.

Ajinomoto representatives also delivered a corporate briefing, sharing the company's history, sustainability initiatives, and its evolving use of automation in manufacturing. An interactive quiz and Q&A session allowed students to further explore the role of accounting in supporting operational efficiency and strategic decision-making.



The visit concluded with a live cooking demonstration using Ajinomoto products, offering a practical example of how product innovation aligns with consumer needs.

Industry visits such as this are increasingly seen as a vital component in preparing students for the workforce, providing exposure to workplace culture, professional expectations, and emerging industry trends.

Sunway College extends its heartfelt thanks to Ajinomoto (Malaysia) Berhad for the warm hospitality and for providing such a memorable and educational experience. The visit undoubtedly sparked new perspectives and deeper motivation among our future accounting professionals.



Proud Moment for VU @ Sunway at the 2025 Case Study Competition

10 July 2025

Heartiest congratulations to Victoria University @ Sunway for their outstanding performance at the 2025 Case Study Competition, organised by the Hong Kong Logistics Association and hosted by Sunway University in collaboration with Victoria University, Sunway.

We could not be prouder of our VU Sunway Supply Chain students for their dedication, determination, and remarkable display of innovation and teamwork. Your hard work and excellence continue to inspire!

Award Highlight:

Best ESG Idea – Victoria University

- Ivy Jean Kellett
- Mohamad Fariz Ilman Bin Mohamad Annuar
- Ng Le Xine

Special thanks to Dr. Jason Cheok, Director of Programme for his strong support and leadership, and to Ms. Maheswary Subramani, Senior Lecturer and Coordinator Supply Chain & International Trade for her dedicated guidance and mentorship throughout the journey.





AUSMAT Students Delight in a Night Under the Moonlight at AUSMAT, Sunway College KL
25 July 2025



On the evening of 4th July, AUSMAT students at Sunway College gathered once again for a moon viewing event held from 7 to 8.30 pm. The event followed an engaging in-class presentation that sparked renewed interest in astronomy. Students who wished to take part attended a dedicated briefing session, where they registered and prepared for the experience. The skies were clear that evening, offering an unobstructed view of the moon. Students participated enthusiastically in setting up the telescope—mounting it, adjusting its components, and learning how to align it for optimal viewing.



Students preparing the telescope and inserting the lenses



Adjusting the alignment of the telescope's finder scope

With the help of the Stellarium app, students were able to locate the moon's position and explore the night sky in augmented reality. As the sky darkened, the moon's features—its craters, maria, and rugged terrain—came into sharper contrast, much to the students' amazement.



Taking a look at the moon

Students also had the opportunity to capture photographs of the moon by attaching their phones to the telescope using a special adapter. The resulting images were a unique keepsake from a memorable night of discovery.

By 8.30 pm, students helped to disassemble the telescope, wrapping up an evening filled with learning and excitement.



The moon viewing event once again provided AUSMAT students with a valuable hands-on experience, igniting curiosity and deepening their appreciation for the wonders of the night sky.

Cleared for Take-off: Sunway College Ipoh's Alumni Journey Begins

25 July 2025



Sunway College Ipoh recently marked a meaningful milestone by organising its first-ever Alumni Hi-Tea, a heartwarming gathering that brought together former students for an afternoon of reconnection, inspiration, and celebration.

Held at Impiana Hotel, the event was graced by the presence of the Chief Executive of Sunway College Ipoh, Prof Dr Cheng Mien Wee, Principal of Sunway College Ipoh, Puan Wan Nor Haliza and a special guest speaker, Mr. Harvey Foo, Chief Problem Solver at Sparta Haus Sdn. Bhd. Mr. Foo delivered a thought-provoking talk titled "Live in the Moment Without Regrets", where he shared insights on the ESBI quadrant, the "Die With Zero" mindset, and the importance of avoiding shortcuts and scams in life and business.

Throughout the event, attendees took the opportunity to reconnect with old friends and forge new bonds across different graduating classes. It was heartening to see graduates from different years come together, share their experiences, and build meaningful connections that may lead to future collaborations.

Adding a unique touch to the event was its airport and airplane-themed concept, symbolising the idea of life's continuous journey. A highlight of the event was the launching of a time capsule gimmick — where alumni were invited to pen down wishes, reflections, or memories and fold them into paper planes. These meaningful messages were placed into a time capsule,

which will reopen a decade later, after years of future alumni gatherings and continued memory-making.

The event wrapped up on a high note with an exciting lucky draw session, featuring exclusive giveaways sponsored by The Banjaran Hotsprings Retreat, Sunway Lagoon Theme Park, and Sunway Lost World of Tambun. Many lucky alumni went home with the Banjaran Hotsprings Retreat Day Passes, Lost World Nightpark & Hotsprings and Captain Quack Land Experience tickets, and a 1 Night Stay at Sunway Lost World of Tambun Floating Villa, creating joyful endings to an already memorable day.

This inaugural gathering marks the beginning of many more to come, as Sunway College Ipoh continues to build and celebrate its growing alumni community — one meaningful connection at a time.

Ejen Ali the Movie 2 Takes Sunway Students Behind the Scenes

5 August 2025



It was an exciting day for students at Sunway College as the creative minds behind Ejen Ali the Movie 2 paid a special visit, all thanks to an initiative led by the Sunway Diploma Studies Department of Communication (SDS DCOMM). The event offered a rare, behind-the-scenes look into what it really takes to bring an animated film to life, while also inspiring students with real stories from the industry.



Held at JC Hall 1, the event was a collaboration between SDS DCOMM and WAU Animation, under Primeworks Studios, Media Prima Berhad. Close to 200 students from four SDS DCOMM programs: Diploma in Communication, Diploma in Interactive New Media, Diploma in Digital Creative Content, and Certificate in Digital Creative Content filled the hall, eager to learn. Lecturers from the department were also present to show support and share in the experience with their students.



- Are your characters relatable? How do they make your audience
- Is your story universal? Is there more stories beyond what you have?

The session gave students an inside look at the creative process behind Ejen Ali the Movie 2, as WAU Animation's creative directors and executive producer walked them through every stage of production, from concept development and animation to voice acting, sound design, and marketing. While the movie was part of the spotlight, the real takeaway was the knowledge and inspiration the team shared, shedding light on the real challenges and exciting possibilities in the world of animation.



To keep the energy high, the event also included fun quizzes with gifts, a lively Q&A session, and a heartfelt moment where tokens of appreciation were presented by Mr. Goh Wai Meng, Director of Sunway Diploma Studies, alongside Miss Nurzalina Ramli, Head of Programme for SDS DCOMM.



One of the most unforgettable moments came when Ejen Ali and his sidekick mascot made a surprise entrance into the hall, sending students into a frenzy of excitement. Phones were out, laughter filled the air, and everyone rushed to capture a photo with the beloved characters.



The entire experience was more than just a movie event, it was a memorable day of learning, excitement, and inspiration. From engaging with industry professionals to getting a firsthand look at the animation process, students gained real insight into what it is like to be part of the creative world. Judging by the cheers, curious questions, and beaming smiles, especially during the surprise mascot appearance, it was clear the event left a lasting impression on everyone in the hall.



This event was a great example of how SDS DCOMM continues to go beyond the classroom, giving students real-world exposure, hands-on learning opportunities, and a platform to dream bigger.

This article is written by SDS lecturer, Mieza Shafieza Mohd Fuad.

Celebrating Excellence: A-Level Student, Lim Hung Shines at the WCA World Championship 2025
5 August 2025



It is with immense pride that we celebrate the outstanding achievement of Lim Hung, a student from the Sunway A-Level July 2024 intake, who has recently made headlines on the global stage. Lim Hung, who also serves as the External Relations Manager of the Sunway Rubik's Cube Club, represented Malaysia at the prestigious Rubik's WCA World Championship 2025, held from 3rd July to 6th July at the Seattle Convention Center, United States. This event brought together over 1,800 top cubers from 74 countries, making it one of the largest and most competitive gatherings in the history of speedcubing.

Among this elite crowd, Lim Hung distinguished himself by clinching the bronze medal in the 7x7x7 Cube event, with an impressive solve time of 1 minute 48.59 seconds. His performance placed him just behind American cubing legend Max Park, who took gold with a time of 1 minute 43.23 seconds. This achievement not only highlights Lim Hung's personal dedication and skill but also reflects the growing prominence of Malaysian talent in the international speedcubing arena. His success is a testament to the balance of academic excellence and extracurricular passion that we strive to nurture in our A Level students.

We extend our heartfelt congratulations to Lim Hung for this remarkable accomplishment and look forward to supporting his continued journey of excellence, both in academics and in the world of speedcubing.

Malaysia is striving to become a tech powerhouse in South-East Asia but challenges remain
18 July 2025



*Malaysia is aiming to be the regional leader of South-East Asia as a digital economy. (ABC News:
Graphic by Jarrod Fankhauser)*

Natalie Loi is part of the vanguard working to turn Malaysia into a tech powerhouse in South-East Asia.

Ms Loi was just 19 when she founded her first tech startup, UnBound, while a business student at Victoria University in 2017.

It started out as an education tool — using augmented reality games to make learning more accessible and fun.

"I didn't have a background in tech so I self-taught myself into building a learning application," she said.



Natalie Loi founded a tech startup company at just 17 years of age. (Supplied: Natalie Loi)

UnBound has now has expanded and delved into artificial intelligence (AI), and works with more than 100 institutions across South-East Asia, Australia and UK.

Ms Loi said the government had been focusing on helping startups like hers and upskilling young graduates.

"As a developing country, we have so much more potential to grow than a developed country," she told the ABC.

She said already developed countries had more outdated infrastructure while Malaysia could leapfrog ahead.

"There's a lot of space for growth and a lot of potential for skill if you want to make an impact in the world."

Malaysia's digital transformation

Once the largest exporter of tin, rubber and palm oil in the world, Malaysia's economy largely relied on its mining and agricultural sector until the 1980s when it rapidly industrialised under former prime minister Mahathir Mohamad.

The country's focus on its digital economy began in 1996 with plans to develop a "Multimedia Super Corridor" mirroring Silicon Valley in the United States.

While the plan was never fully realised, the country's second economic transformation is now well underway.

The COVID-19 pandemic pushed fast-forward on growth in the country's digital sector, said trade economist Juita Mohamad.

"It was fuelled by increasing e-commerce adoption and also overall digital transformation not just within the private sector, but also the public sector in Malaysia," said Ms Mohamad, who was until recently the director of the Economics and Business Unit at Malaysia's Institute for Democracy and Economic Affairs.

In 2021, the Malaysian government created an outline for Malaysia's digital economy called the Digital Economy Blueprint.

Its goal is for Malaysia to become the "regional leader in the digital economy" by 2030, creating jobs in sectors ranging from semiconductor manufacturing to cybersecurity, software development, e-commerce and creative media.

Digital industries are now expected to contribute 25 per cent of Malaysia's GDP by the end of 2025, up from about 17 per cent 10 years ago.



Sam Majid says bridging gaps in digital access is important to ensure Malaysia's workforce can take part in the digital economy. (Supplied: Sam Majid)

The government is putting a major emphasis on AI's role in this digital economy road map, creating a dedicated agency, the National Artificial Intelligence Office (NAIO), under the Ministry of Digital in December 2024.

According to NAIO's chief executive, Sam Majid, the office's remit includes "policymaking, partnerships and programs that foster AI adoption across public and private sectors".

The NAIO collaborates with individuals like Natalie Loi and organisations such as Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation (MDEC) to incorporate AI into Malaysia's everyday economy.

Ms Loi said one of UnBound's projects was assisting the government in its implementation of the "smart cities" concept — essentially the digitising of municipal planning and services.

"The concept of a smart city is that you want everything to be interconnected," said Ms Loi.



UnBound is using AI in city planning to help relevant authorities respond more effectively during natural disasters. (Supplied: UnBound)

Ms Loi said UnBound was developing an AI-driven surveillance system for the Malaysian Public Works Department and the Ministry of Housing and Local Government to assist with "real-time monitoring and intelligent decision-making".

Data centre development

One of the most visible signs of Malaysia's digital transformation is the development of huge data centres.

Data centres are usually large facilities — on average one hectare in size — that help manage and store huge volumes of digital data.

They provide the infrastructure to power tools such as social media, search engines and even ride-sharing apps, and are also essential when it comes to processing AI.

Malaysia's strategic location in Asia, relative lack of earthquakes, cheap land and low electricity prices have made it an attractive hub for this key internet infrastructure.

The YTL Green Data Center Park in Johor state is one of the biggest in Malaysia, covering 275 hectares (roughly the size of 13 MCGs).

Google announced in mid-2024 that it would invest \$US2 billion (\$3 billion) to develop its first data centre in the country, part of parent company Alphabet's initiative to expand its cloud services in the Asia Pacific.

Microsoft has also announced plans to invest \$US2.2 billion investment into Malaysia over the next four years.



Microsoft announced this year the construction of its first "cloud region" data-centre infrastructure in Malaysia. (Reuters: Gonzalo Fuentes/file)

Meanwhile, Alibaba Cloud, the cloud computing arm of Chinese tech giant Alibaba Group, is opening its third data centre in Malaysia this month.

While these foreign investments are fuelling Malaysia's digital economy, analysts say they could also make things sticky for the developing nation when it comes to balancing its relationships with other nations.

"This has been an interesting year for Malaysia, given that there has been a lot of data centres built in the country, not just by Microsoft but also Chinese tech giants and other non-Western

investors," said Mark Manantan, director of cybersecurity and critical technologies for the Pacific Forum, a not-for-profit foreign policy research institute that looks into the Indo-Pacific. "Countries which previously were not involved in the direct decoupling and de-risking efforts of the US against China are really going to feel the heat because the US is expanding its reach in terms of curbing China's access," said Mr Manantan.

Mr Majid said the Malaysian government was aware of this rivalry between the two big powers.

"Neutrality is the big, bold word that we often use when it comes to, engagement with any international parties," he said.



Johor, a state in the south of Malaysia that's closest to Singapore, is growing into a hub for data centres in the country. (AP: Vincent Thian)

Despite Malaysia's ambition, experts say the country's digital transformation faces challenges. The rising number of data centres could create environmental issues, and according to Nuarrual Hilal Dahl, a law professor at Universiti Utara Malaysia, the solution may not be straightforward.

"Data centres use up a lot of water and electricity so the government has to make sure that there is sufficient resources for these data centres as well as for citizens," he says.

Malaysia's National Water Services Commission is trying to address this by preparing strict guidelines for data centres to use alternative sources of water such as rainwater and recycled water instead of potable drinking water for their operations.

The YTL Green Data Center Park runs using solar energy but not all data centres are powered with renewables.

Professor Dahl also warned that there might be "hiccups" in the oversight of data centres which is shared between the state and federal governments.

The Malaysian constitution states that federal law takes precedence over state laws if there's a conflict, but Professor Dahl said state governments were "not bound by the advice and command of federal agencies" such as the Department of Environment.

"The law has to be modernised to keep up with the new challenges," he said.

There's also scepticism that foreign investments into Malaysia's digital innovation is leading to quality jobs.

Ms Mohamad said that the government hopes to create 50,000 new jobs but questioned whether there were enough local workers with the right skills.

Azran Osman-Rani, the co-founder of a digital health startup called Naluri, agreed.

"A lot of it [the jobs] in data centres involve maintenance and manufacturing but they're not generating a lot of digital talent like software engineers, data scientists and digital marketers," he said.

"To me, a real measure that the Malaysian government should focus on is how many of our digital companies can successfully operate and expand beyond Malaysia instead of how many foreign companies we attract."

Digital divide remains

Experts have pointed out that some areas are benefiting more from the digital transformation than others.

The Malaysian government is in the midst of rolling out 5G technology across the nation but the rollout has mainly focused on populated and urban areas.

Only 90 per cent of households in Malaysia have an internet connection.

"Ninety per cent sounds good but ... we do see pockets in different communities in the East Coast and also in eastern Malaysia that are still not connected," explains Ms Mohamad.



Natalie Loi hopes Malaysia's digital economy will deliver opportunities. (Supplied: Natalie Loi)

Despite these challenges, young Malaysians like Ms Loi are hopeful for Malaysia's digital future.

"AI is opening up a lot of career opportunities, and there's a lot of space for growth and a lot of potential for new skills," she said.

"I can be creative and there's nothing stopping my innovation."