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Regional Game Designers Participate In First Ever Yseali Game Changers Workshop

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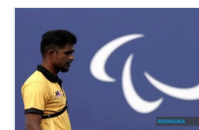
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Credit: US Embassy

By Voon Miaw Ping

KUALA LUMPUR, May 11 (Bernama) -- A total of 75 game designers from 11 Southeast Asian nations are convening in Malaysia's capital for the first ever YSEALI Game Changers Regional Workshop, that aims to equip participants with know-how to produce social impact games as an innovative solution to address pressing challenges in the region.

Organised by the United States Embassy in Malaysia in partnership with Biji-biji Initiative and Synapze, the four-day workshop which began Thursday incorporates a range of instructive modules, including narrative in games, impact game methodology, and transformational game design.

US Ambassador to Malaysia Brian D McFeeters said the workshop provides the talented young technologists in the region a chance to make games that impact their communities and potentially the world.

He said following the success of a similar workshop held for Malaysian game developers last year, the US State Department decided to extend the programme to regional participants this year.



“The idea is to use the power of youth and creativity to create social changes, in the same way as movies, music and culture,” he told reporters after opening the workshop, here, Thursday.

Also present at the event was Youth and Sports Minister Hannah Yeoh.

Meanwhile, participants said the workshop will provide valuable opportunity to learn from the best people in the industry.

A professional game developer from Malaysia, William Chong believed that apart from aiming for their games to be a hit, it is also a social responsibility of developers to create games that impart positive influence on the players.

“Games are really a powerful medium that if we use it to promote good, I believe it can really be the agent of change to bring about positive social impacts to the society,” he said.

Established Indonesian game designer Lydia Ignacia told Bernama that she will use the knowledge she gained from this YSEALI workshop for the benefit of her social entrepreneurship empowerment project.

“I’ve attended many game development programmes before but on social impact, this is my first.

“It definitely gives me the opportunity to learn from the experts and to get better ideas how to develop and frame the idea of these new games from the educational and social impact perspective so they can become a tool that not only benefit the players but also the whole community,” Lydia who is also the volunteer programme manager at Indie Games Group Indonesia (IGGI) said.

The workshop is led by renowned American and Southeast Asian game design experts including Lindsay Grace, Knight Chair in Interactive Media at the University of Miami, Alan Gershenfeld Co-Founder/President of E-Line Media, Lien Tran, award-winning game designer, Saqina Latif, Managing Director of Persona Theory Games from Malaysia, El Lim, Founder of Khayalan Arts from Indonesia and Luna Javier, Co-Founder and Creative Director of Altitude Games, from the Philippines.



The trainers will also provide insights on how to effectively incorporate themes of education, environment, social economic empowerment, and civic engagement into game design, offering valuable perspectives on how to create socially impactful games that can spur positive change in the Southeast Asian region.

During the workshop, participants also required to develop prototype games that address topics including climate change, civic engagement, economic empowerment, education.

"YSEALI Game Changers is a glowing example of the power of games and play to connect people, bring communities together, and inspire economic and socially impactful change.

"It's an illustration of the pervasive nature of play, the power of play to engage, empower and involve not only game players, but the people who make them," Grace said.

Participants in the game jam and pitching competition will compete for a pot of over US\$30,000 in seed funding and a three-month mentorship to complete the development of their game prototypes, leading to a showcase at an international games conference later in 2023.

The Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative (YSEALI) is the U.S. government's signature program to strengthen partnerships with emerging leaders in Southeast Asia; to expand their skills as effective civic, economic and non-governmental leaders in the region; and to encourage them to work together across borders to solve regional challenges.

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