

New AI lab to leverage Grab and NUS data

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AMID tussles with various South-east Asian governments over its potential monopolistic behaviour in the ride-hailing sector due to its acquisition of Uber's regional business, Grab continues to push its agenda of making South-east Asia a more liveable place.

On Wednesday, the Singapore-headquartered consumer platform announced a partnership with the National University of Singapore (NUS) to launch a first-of-its-kind artificial intelligence (AI) lab with a joint initial investment of S\$6 million.

The Lab marks Grab's first major AI lab, and NUS's first AI lab with a commercial partner, said both partners.

The Grab-NUS AI Lab will leverage data from Grab's platform, which has reportedly facilitated more than two billion rides since its 2012 founding. Grab today operates in 225 cities across eight South-east Asian countries. According to Lye Kong Wei, head of data science at Grab and

co-director of the Grab-NUS AI Lab, Grab has since 2012 amassed three petabytes of data, which is equivalent to 40 years of HD-TV video.

Dr Lye told a media briefing on Wednesday: "Every data point represents a footprint on this earth. We want to leverage this data and see what we can get out of it for the common good."

The Business Times understands that the Grab-NUS AI Lab will also use data from NUS's other research units, including data from Singapore's Land Transport Authority and taxi giant ComfortDelGro. Ho Teck Hua, senior deputy president and provost of NUS, said that NUS's data will "complement" Grab's data.

For a start, the Grab-NUS AI Lab will focus on improving the efficiency and reliability of transportation on Grab's platform across South-east Asia, including using rider and driver preferences to better serve both parties. Next, the Lab will expand its focus to examine the larger transportation challenges facing cities in South-east Asia, such as congestion and liveability.



Wenceslao David, a data science lead from Grab, taking Education Minister Ong Ye Kung through a data visualisation demo at the NUS-Grab AI Lab. PHOTO: GRAB