

SME WEEKLY NEWS

(11 May 2020 – 15 May 2020)

Countries	Highlights
<p>MALAYSIA</p> <p>Cobots to help improve productivity of SME manufacturer</p>	<p>A new class of “collaborative robots” or cobots could potentially improve the productivity of Malaysia’s SMEs in the manufacturing sector by up to 30%, says Denmark-based robot manufacturer Universal Robots (UR). Unlike traditional robots designed to work autonomously without any human contact, cobots, the fastest-growing segment of industrial automation, are meant to operate with and in close proximity with humans. The annual revenue for cobot arms is expected to reach US\$11.8 billion (RM51.2 billion) by 2030, according to ABI Research. As companies face rising costs for raw materials and a weak currency, investing in innovative automation technology is necessary to remain competitive. With the assistance of cobots, local manufacturers can achieve higher levels of efficiency and rapid productivity gains. The use of cobots can help expand the manufacturing sector’s contribution to the economy and boost SMEs’ innovation and capacity. According to UR, the average automation levels among Malaysia’s local manufacturing firms are still low with about 80% of companies automating less than 50% of their processes. Firms that have gone the automation route have increased production by as much as 300%, the company adds. They were able to reduce defects by 90% and increase profits by 20%.</p> <p><i>(Source: The Edge Markets, 14 May 2020)</i></p>
<p>CAMBODIA</p> <p>UNDP partners with Cambodian organisation to enhance youth entrepreneurship, SMEs</p>	<p>The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in Cambodia signed a new partnership with Khmer Enterprise to promote entrepreneurship training for Cambodia’s young entrepreneurs and to support the development of SME sector. This partnership aims specifically to ensure that Cambodia’s next generation of entrepreneurs are well-equipped with practical world-class training and mentorship and have access to suitable funding and investment readiness support at the early stage of their startups. The partnership also lays foundation for UNDP Cambodia and Khmer Enterprise to re-enforce their common efforts in improving the SME ecosystem through providing technical and financial support to SMEs in priority sectors, including e-commerce and sustainable SME cluster development. Under this partnership, a business incubation program called Bluetribe was launched in May for Cambodia’s talented youth who have a strong interest in becoming successful entrepreneurs. The program will provide selected youth with quality training and mentorship as well as access to seed funding to start and build their businesses.</p> <p><i>(Source: The Star, 14 May 2020)</i></p>
<p>SINGAPORE</p> <p>New tool to help more than 2,000 SMEs set up online stores</p>	<p>A new mobile commerce solution will help more than 2,000 SMEs set up their own virtual store and have access to a wide network of customers. The initiative aims to help SMEs such as heartland merchants deal with challenges in the retail landscape amid the coronavirus pandemic. The coronavirus pandemic has taken a toll on physical shops, while digital orders have increased during this period, which emphasises the need to help SMEs transition to digital solutions. The initiative, jointly developed by Nanyang Polytechnic’s Singapore Institute of Retail Studies, payment services group Nets and tech firm SCash, is supported by Alibaba Cloud. The mobile phone-based solution is expected to benefit traditional merchants who do not have the know-how to move their businesses online while their physical operations are affected by the Covid-19 outbreak. Once the virtual store has been set up, customers can make orders through a URL or by scanning a QR code at the physical store. After customers make their first purchase, retailers can engage with them through the likes of loyalty rewards or discount vouchers.</p> <p><i>(Source: The Straits Times, 12 May 2020)</i></p>

<p>PHILIPPINES</p> <p>1.2M displaced SME workers get gov't aid</p>	<p>More than 1.2 million Filipinos who had worked for SMEs that temporary closed down during the enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) imposed in Luzon and other parts of the country already received a total of 10.1 billion pesos in wage subsidies from the government. According to a report from the small business wage subsidy (SBWS) inter-agency task force, the first tranche of subsidies has been credited to a total of 1,261,044 beneficiary employees as of 6 May 2020. The Social Security System (SSS) has partnered with Development Bank of the Philippines to automate the payout of the subsidy, which has allowed the distribution to scale up in a short span of time. About 3.4 million affected workers nationwide will receive 5,000 to 8,000 pesos in cash for two months as a form of relief while the economy is on standstill amid the ECQ that started in mid-March and further extended until mid-May in areas with high COVID-19 cases. A total of 51 billion pesos will be given away under the SBWS program. The SBWS was a joint program of the DOF, the SSS, and the Bureau of Internal Revenue to extend financial assistance to displaced workers and their employers badly hit by the socioeconomic fallout caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p><i>(Source: Inquirer.net, 11 May 2020)</i></p>
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