

MEDIA RELEASE

Axiata, Celcom and Boost Launch RM150 Million Cash Fund to Give Immediate Assistance to Micro-SMEs Impacted by COVID-19

The Government of Malaysia, through Ministry of Finance has agreed to contribute RM20 million in support of the Axiata COVID-19 Assistance Program

25 March 2020, Kuala Lumpur: As part of their ongoing corporate community commitment, Axiata Group Berhad (“Axiata” or the “Group”) together with its subsidiaries Celcom Axiata Berhad (“Celcom”), edotco Group (“edotco”) and Axiata Digital announced the launch of a RM150 million cash fund to provide financial assistance to micro-SMEs. Axiata’s COVID-19 Assistance Program includes an initial contribution of RM20 million from the Ministry of Finance.

The COVID-19 Assistance Program serves as a direct and urgent intervention by Axiata to give immediate assistance to micro-SMEs facing financial difficulties arising from the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent Movement Control Order (“MCO”) issued by the Government of Malaysia which saw the closure of all non-essential businesses.

Under the current challenging conditions, micro-SMEs, which easily make up more than 50% of SMEs in Malaysia and fall mostly within the B40 segment of society, will face mounting difficulties in operating their businesses. Micro-SMEs tend to have minimal savings and cash flow to buffer against unpredictable events and will not have sufficient funds to sustain daily needs.

In continuing to play its role as partner in national development, Axiata will offer shariah compliant micro-financing through its subsidiary Axiata Digital, riding on the latter’s Aspirasi digital platform, in the range of RM1,000 to RM10,000 and on favourable terms. This is targeted to benefit an estimate of 150,000 micro-SMEs within Boost, Aspirasi and Celcom ecosystem, as well as within other ecosystems including its e-commerce and FMCG partners and potentially other telcos and e-wallets.

Interest and payment terms include suspended repayment requirements and concessional interest rates. In addition, Axiata’s COVID-19 Assistance Program will also bundle micro-insurance coverage under Aspirasi to protect micro-SME proprietors and merchants with emergency income, accidental death and COVID-19 assistance. For more information about the program, please visit www.aspirasi.co.

Most importantly, by leveraging Aspirasi’s advanced digital technology, micro-SMEs will only be required to undergo a quick 3-minute online process and if approved, funding will be made available in 48 hours from their bank accounts. This allows for ease of applications to be made during the MCO period and for funds to be quickly and efficiently disbursed to businesses in need, with minimal or no human intervention.

Axiata and its group of Malaysian companies in the past number of years have been building a strong base of micro-SMEs within its ecosystem, successfully established through the following platforms:

1. Celcom, Malaysia's leading network operator with an extensive footprint of 75,000 SME customers, dealers and merchants with heavy rural and East Malaysia presence
2. Boost, Malaysia's leading cashless lifestyle e-wallet with 150,000 merchants on-board to date
3. Aspirasi, Malaysia's first fully digital fintech financier, with over RM60 million micro-financing to date across Malaysia and Indonesia

Axiata's President and Group Chief Executive Officer, Tan Sri Jamaludin Ibrahim said: "We are living in an unprecedented time where many of us are grappling with the rapidly evolving global crisis. None of us have ever experienced something like this in our lifetime! As our government and institutions battle on the hour to mitigate the spread of the coronavirus within our communities, corporate Malaysia is also rising to the fore to leverage on our resources and capabilities to alleviate the impact on businesses and communities. We have a very tight window to cast a lifeline to quickly get them back on their feet in order to weather and recover from the pandemic."

"Banks are playing their important role to provide relief for affected SMEs. However, we also need to address the requirements of hundreds of thousands of smaller SMEs that may not meet the standard criteria for bank loans."

"We have a national duty to contribute whatever we can to help as fast and as much as we can. This micro lending RM150 million cash program is one area we can assist in our own small way, quickly and efficiently." Jamaludin said.

Axiata Digital's Chief Executive Officer, Mohd Khairil Abdullah said: "We are fortunate that our fully digital and shariah compliant micro-financing Aspirasi platform can be quickly redeployed to help micro-SMEs in this current extremely challenging environment."

Celcom's Chief Executive Officer, Idham Nawawi said: "As a brand committed to national interests, we have been serving and supporting small businesses for over 30 years. Celcom is grateful to be able to play a role in the rebuilding of Malaysian micro-SMEs at a time when the need is at its greatest."

Jamaludin added: "I would like to thank Celcom and edotco for their help in funding this program, Axiata Digital for leading the effort and our partners for participating with us. I would especially like to extend my utmost gratitude to the Ministry of Finance for their generous support and encouragement that allowed us to realise this special national COVID-19 Assistance Program."

"I also welcome corporations to join us and be part of this program to make a meaningful difference in the livelihood of small businesses."

- END -

About Axiata

As one of the leading telecommunications groups in Asia in pursuit of its vision to be the New Generation Digital Champion by 2022, Axiata has transformed itself from a holding entity with a portfolio of pure-play mobile assets into a Triple Core Strategy driven business focusing on Digital Telco, Digital Businesses and Infrastructure.

Within ASEAN and South Asia, the Group has controlling stakes in market-leading mobile and fixed operators in the region including 'Celcom' in Malaysia, 'XL' in Indonesia, 'Dialog' in Sri Lanka, 'Robi' in Bangladesh, 'Smart' in Cambodia and 'Ncell' in Nepal. Axiata is actively spearheading efforts to transform its mobile-centric operations into digital converged companies.

Axiata's digital businesses are focused on three verticals namely Digital Financial Services ('Boost' and 'Aspirasi'), Digital Advertising ('ADA') and Digital Platform ('Apigate') in the global market.

'edotco', the Group's infrastructure company, operates in six countries to deliver telecommunications infrastructure services, amassing approximately 27,500 towers. Presently the 12th largest independent tower companies globally, it aims to be one of the top regional telecommunications tower companies and is committed to responsible and sustainable business operations.

As a committed and long-term investor, and in line with its sustainability goals, the Group actively supports and drives young talent development; disaster response and recovery; as well as green initiatives. Axiata's broader goal of Advancing Asia aims to piece together the best in the region in terms of innovation, connectivity and talent.

About Celcom Axiata

Celcom is Malaysia's first and largest private mobile network operator, with almost 13 million users on its 2G, 3G and 4G LTE+ networks, covering over 98% of the population. Established in 1988, Celcom is now moving towards integrated multi-access, multimedia services and Internet of Things solutions, in line with evolving technologies and consumer behaviour in Malaysia. A culture that places the customer first is reflected in our award-winning customer service, products, and other corporate accolades at a regional level. Celcom is part of the Axiata Group of Companies, one of the world's largest telecommunications companies, across 10 Asian markets. For more information on Celcom, log on to www.celcom.com.my

About edotco

Established in 2012, edotco Group is the first regional integrated telecommunications infrastructure services company in Asia, providing end-to-end solutions in the tower services sector from tower leasing, co-locations, build-to-suit, energy, transmission and operations and maintenance (O&M).

edotco Group operates and manages a regional portfolio of over 31,500 towers across core markets of Malaysia, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Laos and the Philippines with 19,991 towers directly operated by edotco and a further 11,521 towers managed through a range of services provided. edotco strives to deliver outstanding performance in telecommunications infrastructure services and solutions. Its state-of-the-art real-time monitoring service, echo, has driven significant improvements in field operations while maximizing operational efficiencies in terms of battery, energy and fuel consumption for telecommunications infrastructure.

edotco Group was recently awarded the Frost & Sullivan 2019 Asia Pacific Telecoms Tower Company of the Year Award for its demonstrated exemplary business growth and performance in Southeast Asia.

About Axiata Digital

Axiata Digital (AD), the digital services arm of Axiata Group Berhad (Axiata), was established to support the increasingly digital lifestyle of Axiata consumers. AD's role has evolved from an investor of 30 brands to a business operator with portfolios concentrated on three strategic businesses. These include digital financial services such as e-wallets, micro-financing and micro-insurance, digital advertising that use data-driven solutions to enhance business success, and platform services focused on API's (Application Programming Interface) that redefine the way businesses communicate with consumers. Flagship brands within the portfolio are Boost, Aspirasi, ADA and Apigate. For more information, visit <https://www.axiatadigital.com>

About Aspirasi

Aspirasi is an end-to-end digital financial services platform that serves and empowers micro-enterprises and SME businesses. We offer a range of micro-financing solutions such as working capital, supply chain financing and invoice financing, along with micro-insurance products that include credit insurance, health insurance, term life insurance and travel insurance. Our aim is to help the underserved community achieve their business goals while providing support on their journey of dynamic financial growth. For more information, visit www.aspirasi.co

Issued By:

Corporate Communications,
Axiata Group Berhad
Axiata Corporate Headquarters, Axiata Tower,
9 Jalan Stesen Sentral 5, Kuala Lumpur Sentral.
50470 Kuala Lumpur

For media enquiries, please contact:

Anuja Ravendran
Corporate Communications
Tel: +6012-2380581
Email: anuja@axiata.com