Above: Mr Steven Ang, EyRIS' senior vice-president for business development, whose company won the gold award for Most Promising Innovation at the Techblazer Awards. The AI system, called Selena+, has been implemented at all polyclinics in Singapore.

Left: Mr Felix Tan, founder of Skilio, which received a gold award in the Student Techblazer category.
ST PHOTOS: MARK CHEONG

AI system that cuts diagnosis time for eye diseases wins gold

Siti Sarah

An artificial intelligence (AI) deep learning system that reduces the diagnosis process for eye diseases from an average of 30 minutes to just 8½ minutes has come out tops as Most Promising Innovation.

It took the gold in the category on Monday at the fourth annual Techblazer Awards, the nation's highest accolade for tech innovation.

The 2021 awards saw over 440 nominations, up from 403 submissions in 2020, and the highest number of nominations in a single year since they were started in 2018.

Monday's event took place at Suntec Singapore Convention and Exhibition Centre and was attended by Minister for Communications and Information Josephine Teo.

Developed by local health tech company EyRIS, the Singapore Eye LEson Analyzer+ (Selena+) automatically grades fundus images – or images on the inside, back surface of the eye – and detects eye diseases such as diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma and age-related macular degeneration, to limit the effects of preventable blindness.

Mr Steven Ang, 47, EyRIS senior vice-president for business development, told The Straits Times that Selena+ can process fundus images and return the results to a patient within 15 to 20 seconds compared with about a day which is required when it involves a human grader.

Selena+ has been implemented at all polyclinics here as part of a programme to conduct eye screenings for diabetic patients.

It has been deployed in 22 countries and EyRIS is looking to expand into other markets including China and the United States.

Another winner at the Techblazer Awards was a team from the National University of Singapore and Singapore University of Technology and Design, who received a gold award under the Student Techblazer category for an AI-powered portfolio that lists students' soft skills.

Skilio identifies their skill sets based on the co-curricular activity (CCA), competition and internship experiences they upload onto the platform.

Mr Felix Tan, 25, founder and chief executive of Skilio, told ST: "As students, we realised that when it comes to interviews with employers, we may not have much work experience, but soft skills gained from volunteering trips or CCAs can help to showcase our ability to do the job."

Skilio has about 4,000 users and has matched 225 of them to employers for short-term internships or industry projects.

The awards were organised by the Infocomm Media Development Authority and tech industry association SGTech.

Mrs Teo said at the ceremony that driving innovation is a collective effort. "We will continue to support companies across all industries in their innovation and digitalisation journey," she said.

ssbar@sph.com.sg