



ENSURING NO ONE IS LEFT BEHIND, THROUGH DIGITALIZATION

By Surina Shukri, MDEC CEO

The Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation (MDEC) has become a force to be reckoned with since its inception 25 years ago. Established in 1996 as the primary agency to lead the MSC Malaysia initiative⁶⁵, it evolved in the last decade to become a critical mover for the digital economy. Operating under the oversight of the Ministry of Communications and Multimedia Malaysia (KKMM), it continues to manage its track-record of successfully driving forward the nation's digital economic agenda.

MDEC has been spurring the country's digital economy through three key thrusts – empowering digitally skilled Malaysians, enabling digitally-powered businesses and driving digital sector investments. These initiatives have created multiple positive impacts on the nation's economy.

There is no doubt that the growth of the digital economy plays an important part in society's betterment. As is, the digitalization of the economy is at the forefront of societal change today as it serves as a social equalizer to drive shared prosperity for all. This is especially so for countries that are now emerging from the debilitating COVID-19 pandemic.

The chaos of 2020 has underscored the urgency and relevancy of digital transformation for geopolitical segments; businesses and services sectors; and all socio-economic facets. This includes acknowledging and embracing the digital new norms and gaining access to the right tools as well as support services that can help all Malaysians make that digital leap.

⁶⁵ Established by the Malaysian government to accelerate the growth of the nation's Digital Economy, the MSC Malaysia status provides eligible ICT-related businesses, both local and foreign, with a wide range of incentives, rights and privileges to promote continued growth. <https://mdec.my/what-we-offer/msc-malaysia/>

Ensuring Digital Literacy for All

To ensure that no one is left behind in this shift to a digital economy, it is critical that Malaysians of all economic levels have some basic level of digital skills. That is the main fundamental for MDEC's #SayaDigital Movement, an initiative that aims to empower and embolden Malaysians with the right capabilities so they can quickly embrace living in the digital era faster.

Done in collaboration with the Malaysian Ministry of Communications and Multimedia (KKMM), it will feature several MDEC-led capacity-building programmes that will provide not only businesses with various means to go digital but more importantly, enable Malaysians to be digitally skilled with speed and at scale.

With this Movement, we hope to accomplish four primary goals, namely 'digital making life convenient'; 'digital boosting income'; 'digital empowering careers'; and "digital accelerating business expansion".

Part of the movement includes MDEC's eBerkat programme that aims to help Malaysians gain knowledge on digital financial services. Specifically targeting the B40⁶⁶ community and micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), the platform gives them access to Savings, Lending, Investment, Payment (SLIP) capabilities and access to digital financial services and instruments.

Digital Literacy Leading to More Opportunities

Increased digital literacy among Malaysians will eventually lead to more opportunities for them as well. This is especially true with revenue generation, which is a core concern for Bottom 40 percent (B40) and Middle 40 percent (M40) communities in the country. With the chaos caused by COVID-19, it has become crucial that affected communities have as many avenues for revenue and income generation as possible.

MDEC initiatives, like the Global Online Workforce (GLOW) programme, provides a digital platform where Malaysians are able to generate income through work found via crowdsourcing.

There is also eRezeki, another programme designed to open-up revenue opportunities for Malaysians, especially those with low incomes. This is done by allowing them to do digital assignments matched with their respective skills via an online crowdsourcing platform.

Launched in June 2015, over 300,000 participants (until end 2019) have since benefited from this initiative and have reported earning additional incomes.

Digitalizing MSMEs

Aside from ensuring digital literacy among Malaysians and opening up income opportunities for them, it is also important that businesses, especially the MSMEs, digitalize so they can readily leverage on and access the digital economy.

In our effort to accelerate digitalization among MSMEs, MDEC introduced our eUsahawan programme in November 2015 to help onboard MSMEs into various e-commerce platforms. With the challenges that many MSMEs, who are mostly traditional brick and mortar business, face, the programme ensures that we help prepare them with an alternative avenue to access customers and income.

Accessing a bank of knowledge is also key for MSMEs that want to digitalize, which is where our Go-eCommerce learning platform comes into play. Launched in July 2017, this platform features an internationally recognized curriculum for beginners, intermediate learners and advanced entrepreneurs with the goal to provide participants with the knowledge they need to successfully transition from a traditional brick-and-mortar business to e-commerce.

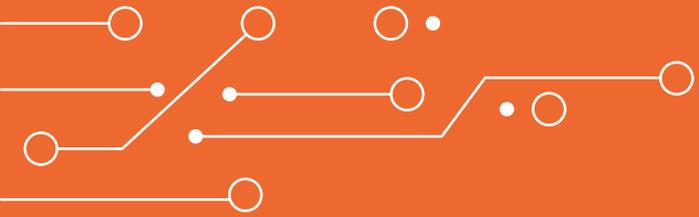
Towards Malaysia 5.0

Even with MDEC developing and introducing many initiatives that encourage digital literacy and digitalization to bridge the digital gap, we also understand the importance of including private enterprises as well. This is why MDEC has also partnered with the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) and Malaysia's Central Bank, Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM) to organize the Financial Innovation Lab in Malaysia.

By harnessing the innovativeness of these local private enterprises, businesses and startups through the challenge, we can develop and find solutions that help to promote an inclusive and connected digital economy.

This is especially important as while MDEC is focused on growing and developing the country's digital economy, we are also driven by the vision of Malaysia 5.0 – a human-first society in a tech-age.

⁶⁶ Malaysians are categorized into three different income groups: Top 20 percent (T20), Middle 40 percent (M40), and Bottom 40 percent (B40).



This will see digital innovations capably resolve societal problems while building a sustainable and inclusive economy where Malaysians of all walks of life will enjoy shared prosperity.

So, while we are making efforts to march forward towards the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), we are also mindful that we have to put society at the centre of technology rather than the other way round.

After all, technology should work for the betterment of all, or else, what is the point.