

National 4IR Policy to propel Malaysia's socio-economic digital transformation

BY MATTHEW UMPANG ON JULY 5, 2021, MONDAY AT 4:05 PM

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Dato' Sri Mustapa bin Mohamed (left) and Khairy Jamaluddin. – File pictures

KUCHING (July 3): Malaysia is poised to be transformed into a high-income nation with the use of technology and digitalisation under the National Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) Policy which was launched on July 1, 2021.

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The policy seeks to increase the country's readiness in making use of the 4IR, while supporting the country's development policies such as Shared Prosperity Vision 2030 (SPV 2030) and Five-year Malaysia Plans.

In addition, the National 4IR Policy prepares the main principle guidelines and strategic direction for the ministries and agencies in drafting policies and action plans to optimise resource distribution and implementation coordination in matters relating to emerging technologies which will benefit the people, the public and the private sector.

It also addresses risks from 4IR technologies whilst preserving the Malaysian values and culture.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Economy) Dato' Sri Mustapa bin Mohamed said at the virtual launch of the policy in Kuala Lumpur that Malaysians were witnessing profound shifts across all aspects of life due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

"The pandemic has brought about numerous challenges. As Malaysia embarks on its journey towards greater digitalisation and sustainable development, more efforts need to be done to ensure we keep abreast with current trends to stay competitive in the future," he said.

Thus the Covid-19 pandemic has led to a major realignment of the Malaysian economy, particularly in the form of new business models and the reshaping of production patterns as well as consumption preferences.

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To ensure that Malaysia receives optimum benefits from 4IR, Mustapa said that the government has developed the National 4IR Policy in anticipation of emerging developments.

He also said the policy not only provides an overarching direction that gears the country for the 4IR, but also provides guidance and promotes coherence in achieving the 4IR agenda, besides managing potential risks that could arise from 4IR.

“The National 4IR Policy serves to assist in leveraging innovation and ethical use of 4IR technologies for the country’s strategic socio-economic transformation by harnessing this technological revolution,” he said.

While the 4IR involves the transformation of the entire ecosystem, across and within companies, industries, society and countries, it emphasises and shapes the way technology and society co-exists and contributes to one another.

This is because the government is taking the opportunity to provide transformation that will ensure industries and society work better, smarter and more seamlessly with each other, while protecting the environment and leading society towards a better future.

“The National 4IR Policy will be supported by the Malaysia Digital Economy Blueprint, which was launched this year on February 19, and they will act as guiding documents for the Malaysians to leverage the potential of 4IR,” said Mustapa.

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He further explained that the National 4IR Policy, which is governed by the National Digital Economy and a 4IR Council, which was established to drive and ensure effective implementation of initiatives that cut across various ministries and agencies.

This is because the government recognises the benefits everyone could enjoy in harnessing 4IR towards achieving Malaysia’s long term goals outlined in the country’s national policies and with all the prospective benefits that 4IR will bring to Malaysia.

It is thus the government's hope that the National 4IR Policy will be able to guide Malaysians in carving their path in embracing and leveraging 4IR's potential towards achieving balanced, responsible and sustainable growth as well.

The rakyat will enjoy improved quality of life as technologies will be used to achieve better work-life balance, greater convenience, safety and security, job transformation into higher value-add and higher pay, improved social wellbeing and environmental sustainability.

Businesses will also become more productive because of 4IR as they will be more competitive and innovative in their offerings, business operations and value delivery to the consumers.

Also at the launch of the policy, Science, Technology and Innovation (MOSTI) Minister Khairy Jamaluddin said the policy was a testament of the government's commitment towards realising the digital revolution, and it will drive efforts to implement the 4IR agenda and leverage the transformation of technology for the socioeconomic development of the people and the nation.

For him, the policy, which is built on a whole-of-nation approach through people-private-public partnerships, will address and optimise the challenges and opportunities that the digital age will have on the country's economy, society and environmental development.

"A comprehensive 4IR policy is necessary to provide and equip the rakyat with 4IR knowledge and skill sets whilst also boosting workforce productivity. The World Bank has reported that human skills are increasingly being replaced by technology-led productivity,"

"This is why it is important for our workforce to harness 4IR technology and embark on digital innovation to thrive in a fast-changing work environment," said Khairy.

With the introduction of the policy, Khairy believes that the competitiveness of the nation will be further enhanced through greater productivity while coupled with the adoption of emerging technologies, the nation's industries will also thrive.

Although 4IR is said to be more related to disruptive technologies, Khairy said the policy also underlines strategies that will strike the right balance between the need to achieve technological advancement whilst also solving social problems by safeguarding the moral and cultural values of Malaysia's society.

The National 4IR Policy outlines four policy thrusts, 16 strategies and 32 national initiatives, which set the direction for all ministries and agencies to align their plans in relation to 4IR and emerging technologies.

Each policy thrust is supported by customised strategies and initiatives targeting businesses, society and the government, considering the interdependency of each group to uplift the readiness of the country for 4IR.

The four main thrusts of the National 4IR Policy are to equip the rakyat with 4IR knowledge and skill sets, forge a connected nation through digital infrastructure development, future-proof regulations to be agile with technological changes, and accelerate 4IR technology innovation and adoption.



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