REALISING A FULLY DIGITALISED NATION BY 2030

STARPICKS

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The virtual launch of the National 4IR Policy, officiated by both the Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Economy) Datuk Seri Mustapa Mohamed (left) and the Science, Technology and Innovation (Mosti) Minister Khairy Jamaluddin on July 1.

AFTER the official launch of the National Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) Policy on July 1, *The Star* posed some questions to the Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Economy) Datuk Seri Mustapa Mohamed on the policy.

Will large-scale implementation of the Fourth Industrial Revolution require big investments for the supporting infrastructure?

Just as the First Industrial Revolution required coal mining to power steam engines, and the

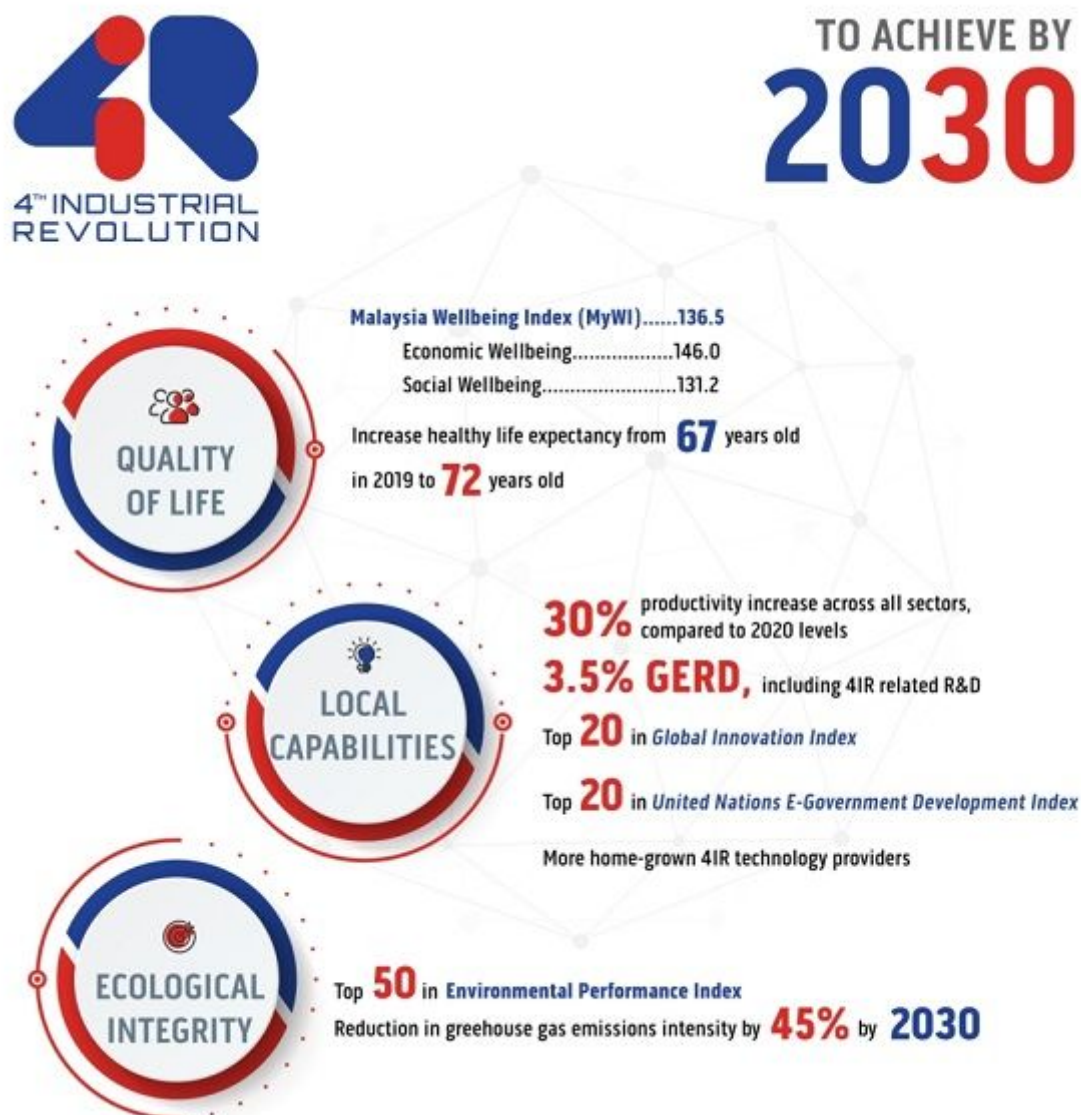Home   For You   Bookmark   Audio   Search

Revolution (4IR) will need the supporting infrastructure to enable newly emerging technologies to thrive.

The National 4IR Policy will streamline efforts to facilitate the building of digital infrastructure via strategic investment projects.

It outlines the respective responsibilities of the government, which will play its role as facilitator – and of business, which will invest in the hard and soft infrastructure that will form the basis of 4IR technology. We expect the private sector to play a big role in supporting the 4IR agenda.

The National Fibersation and Connectivity Plan (NFCP) and Jalinan Digital Negara (Jendela) are examples of infrastructure plans that will ultimately reduce broadband prices and provide internet access to all spectrums of society.

As mentioned by the Prime Minister during the launch of the Malaysia Digital Economy Blueprint last February, a total of RM15bil will be invested over ten years for the implementation of 5G infrastructure nationwide.

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Most micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) acknowledge the importance of embracing this new technological wave but worry for the implementation costs and the new methods required to run it. Are there plans to help guide them?

Many MSMEs, particularly those that are currently brick-and-mortar businesses, will need hand-holding to help them leverage technology that can help their businesses. The National 4IR Policy outlines a holistic plan to do just this, covering all aspects of running a business in a 4IR world.

From financial assistance in the form of incentives and funding, to facilitation in the form of business advisory and informational support – the government will help MSMEs become 4IR-ready.

Our aim is to help 800 thousand MSMEs digitalise by 2025.

Already, a total of RM19.29bil worth of financial and non-financial assistance via the various stimulus packages such as Prihatin, Penjana and Pemerkasa, have been allocated to help businesses, especially MSMEs, digitalise.

We have also developed a unified portal, that is, the MyAssist MSME, which is a centralised platform that will leverage existing one-stop centres such as the Pusat Internet Komuniti (PIK) and Pusat Internet Desa (PID) to help entrepreneurs acquire knowledge on eCommerce and on digitalising their platforms.

Today, more than 20,000 entrepreneurs are utilising the 873 Pusat Internet Komuniti (PIK) to conduct businesses online. We intend to increase these numbers through the MyAssist MSME platform.

Going forward, the government will transform PIKs and PIDs to play a more aggressive role in assisting MSMEs on their digitalisation journey. In this new 4IR economy, those who do not adapt will perish.

What are some of the ways you can help equip the rakyat with 4IR-relevant knowledge and skills, such as reskilling exercises?

Although the 4IR will create many high-skilled jobs moving forward, and promises to push local talent upwards to reach their full potential – we should not underestimate just how disruptive it will be.

Many jobs today will tomorrow be obsolete. It is pertinent that we reskill and upskill ourselves in order to prepare for this brave new world. There will be many job opportunities for those with the right skills and mindset.

Therefore, the National 4IR Policy takes the issue of preparing our workforce for the future very seriously. It outlines initiatives to reskill and upskill the existing workforce.

Besides the current workforce, the policy also equips the next generation with 4IR skill sets by targeting students from primary to tertiary education (including TVET) to prepare them for the 4IR

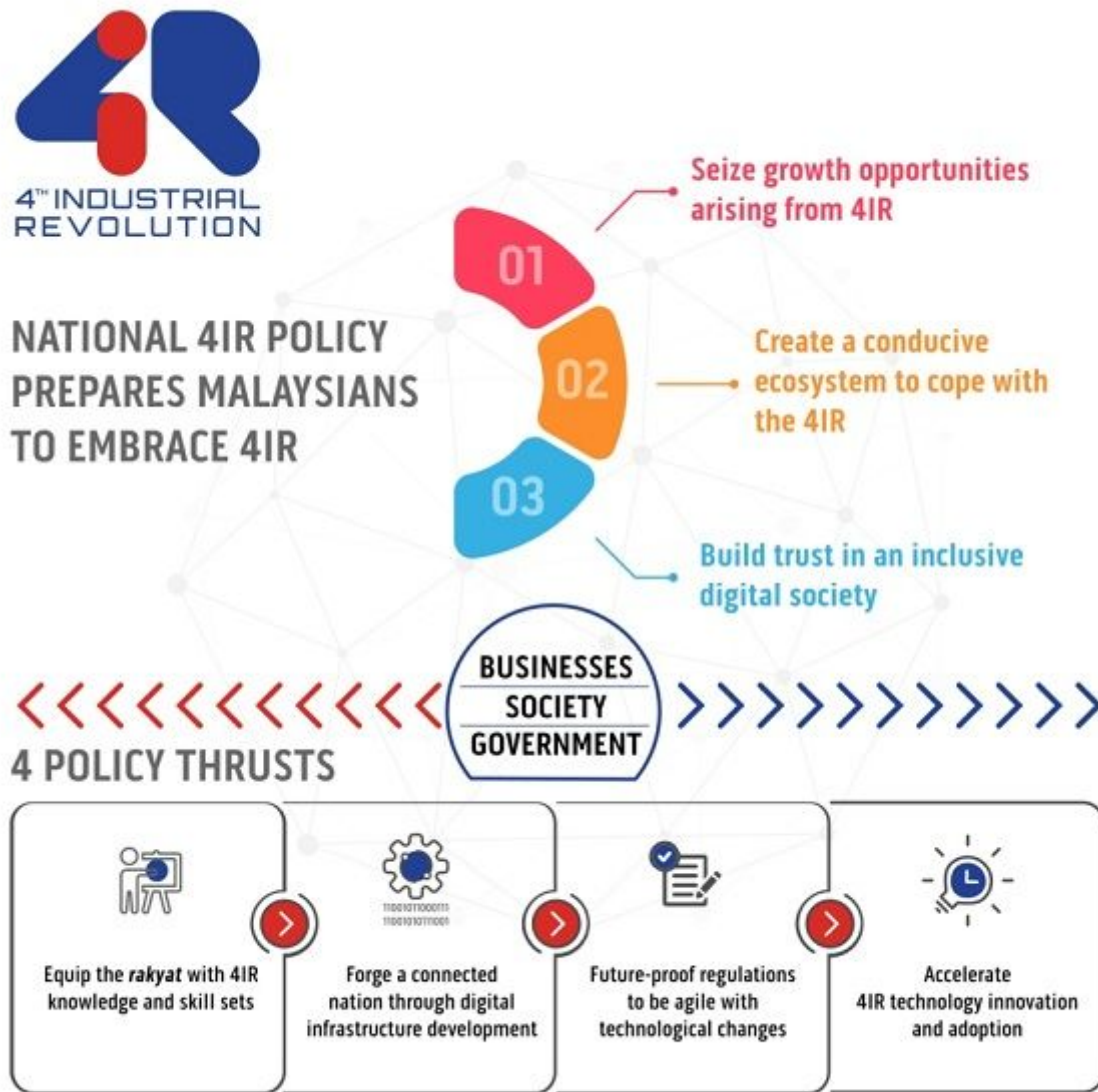Home   For You   Bookmark   Audio   Search

What's the estimated time line for this roadmap to achieve 4IR?

The time line is roughly divided into three phases. In the first phase, which will last until 2022, the focus will be on enhancing 4IR awareness and adoption.

Among the key initiatives in this phase will be to upskill and reskill workers, establish formal social protection schemes for gig workers, and provide 4IR related training to university students and government officers.

The second phase, which will take place from 2022-2025, will focus on introducing an ethics framework for technological development and facilitating a technologically enabled public delivery system.

The National 4IR Policy is set on ensuring that the government becomes more technologically and data-driven, thereby increasing the state's capacity to meet the growing demands and expectations of the rakyat. The National Digital Identity project will act as a catalyst for this.

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funding for technology innovation.

With cybersecurity on the rise, users are equally responsible in detecting and stopping the breach. Are there programmes planned to educate the end-users?

In the Global Cybersecurity Index 2020, Malaysia was recently ranked number five in the world and second in Asia Pacific, behind Singapore and South Korea, which are both tied at first place in the region.

The challenge moving forward is that people may not be aware of the risks they are being exposed to through 4IR technology.

Therefore, there are plans in the National 4IR Policy to introduce programmes on improving awareness on cybersecurity through education, enhancing personal data protection, and fostering security on s-commerce (such as commercial activities on social media).

There is also a plan to introduce more robust regulatory standards, such as the 4IR ethics framework, to further safeguard cyberspace for Malaysian citizens.

Could you elaborate on what you perceive are the challenges you might face and perhaps how those can be resolved?

There are several challenges facing the adoption of 4IR technology in our country. The biggest challenge is the resistance to accept change.

Access to finance, the high costs of technological adoption, and the lack of necessary supporting infrastructure are also other challenges that we need to address.

That is the reason why the National 4IR Policy was crafted – as it aims to tackle these problems by among others, raising awareness on the necessity of adopting 4IR technologies, providing financing, and outlining initiatives to establish the necessary 4IR infrastructure.

Any further views to share?

The National 4IR Policy is critical because whether we like it or not, the Fourth Industrial Revolution is already here. Therefore, we cannot afford to be ill-equipped.

Failing to plan is planning to fail. The structure of the workforce we have today will not be the same. We have to all prepare for the jobs of the future.

The policy will help us do just that, and take advantage of the Fourth IR. With this new tech at our disposal, Malaysia will be on our way to becoming a high income country as our level of productivity, innovation, and competitiveness is set to increase exponentially.

With the policy, we can leverage the 4IR in order to not only grow our economy, but to impro quality of life for every Malaysian.

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