

MDEC's 'iron ladies' pave the way for Malaysian women to make the digital leap into 4IR

- Various programmes such as PeDAS, eUsahawan, eRezeki and GLOW continue to empower and upskill with a 54 percent women participation in digital businesses
- Total women workforce in Malaysia reaches 55.1 percent while the digital economy consists of 35 percent

CYBERJAYA, 17 MARCH 2021: The Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation (MDEC), through its digitalisation initiatives, has benefitted many a woman, empowering them to play a vital role in the development of the country.

In continuation of this year's International Women's Day celebration, MDEC's Chief Executive Officer, Surina Shukri said that the agency has received encouraging feedback about its programmes and an even higher participation rate from women which now numbers at 35 percent of the total digital economy workforce.

An analysis by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 2001 revealed that Malaysian women workers' contribution to the country's economy was only four percent then. However, this jumped to 11 percent, in a study conducted between 2011 to 2016.

Malaysian women also continue to show progress in various employment sectors and they are no longer considered as playing second fiddle in their contributions towards the growth of the country's economy.

According to the Department of Statistics of Malaysia, the total female workforce in Malaysia has reached 55.1 percent or 6.21 million people, as of December 2019. Based on another survey done in Southeast Asia, conducted by a research body in Singapore last year, 56 per cent of higher education composition in various fields of studies are represented by women.

"The percentage of women workforce involved in the technology field has now reached 35 percent. I am confident that through the various initiatives by the government and agencies like MDEC, this figure will soar and women are expected to continue to make a significant contribution to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) which is projected to reach 22.6 percent by 2025. This bodes well for our digital economy and investments and is in line with our efforts towards making Malaysia the Heart of Digital ASEAN," said Surina.

Surina added, initiatives such as Perkhidmatan eDagang Setempat (PeDAS) which assists rural entrepreneurs to market their products on ecommerce platforms with facilities made available at 32 Rural Internet Centres (PIDs) nationwide, has been dominated by women with 79 per cent participation or a total of 3,201 people.

At the same time, the eUsahawan Muda programme has attracted 25,713 women or 63 percent of the total number of participants. The eUsahawan Micro programme meanwhile saw women make up 61 percent or 16,718 women participating. Meanwhile, the Global Online Workforce (GLOW PENJANA) programme which empowers Malaysians to earn income online, have seen a 58 percent involvement by women.

All three programmes have trained a total of 220,445 women which make up 54 percent of the total participants.

Sharing her excitement in conjunction with this year's International Women's Day celebration, Surina expressed that women in the country have what it takes for greater achievements, especially in leadership positions in the corporate sector and in the field of technology.

However, she said, continuous efforts must be made to remove existing barriers, including gender bias issues and to encourage more women to be given the opportunity to fill these positions in the corporate sector.

“The Malaysia Digital Economy Blueprint (MyDIGITAL) launched recently by the government will benefit women greatly especially in the field of digital competencies. The initiatives implemented are important steps to empower women in the country in our efforts to continue to lead the digital economy forward, centered on ensuring a shared prosperity for the all and towards realising Malaysia 5.0,” added Surina.

Dr Sumitra Nair, Vice President of MDEC’s Digital Skills and Jobs Division said that various initiatives are carried out to empower Malaysian women in face of challenges in the era of Industrial Revolution 4.0 (4IR). She added that women in the country are very creative, capable of communicating effectively and possess admirable problem-solving skills.

“When we look at the World Economic Forum Report 2020 and on the future of jobs, the three elements mentioned above are very critical for the digital economy sector and I am confident that Malaysian women are ready to play a more active role,” she said.

MDEC’s #Mydigitalmaker programme have benefited some 2.19 million school students nationwide up until December 2020.

“Women have extraordinary spirit to excel in the digital field. Data from the #Mydigitalmaker movement shows that 50 percent of the participants are women,” added Dr Sumitra.

Meanwhile, MDEC’s Chief Digital Business Officer, Aiza Azreen Ahmad who celebrated her first International Women’s Day at MDEC was also excited to share her journey in helping to empower women in the country.

Aiza Azreen, who joined MDEC earlier this month, said the decision to return to serve her beloved country after a long stint in Australia was one of the most memorable moments in her career.

“When I came back, I learned new job skills. Over the years I have been trained by both male and female leaders to be inquisitive and to take new challenges as ways to enhance my knowledge and skillset. The combination of both attributes are the strengths of which I am building every day.

“Women (and men) are susceptible to comfort. It is a natural order. Perhaps we can start getting comfortable with discomfort to motivate ourselves to chart our path in frontier economies such as digital and technology,” added Aiza.

On the topic of women taking sabbaticals to attend to family matters, she stressed the need to help them understand the changes that have taken place during their leave of absence and if the skillsets they had before are still relevant or if there is a need to acquire new skills.

“To help women succeed is to first manage the limitations and expectations of their current capability vis a vis what the economy needs at present. The second step is to retrain their skills to suit current business needs. The third would be building platforms of shared vision/mission and to provide them with training and mentoring programs to ensure that they enjoy and remain on the path towards professional and personal growth through these reskilling methods,” said Aiza.

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About Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation (MDEC)

Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation (MDEC) is a government agency under the purview of the Ministry of Communications and Multimedia Malaysia entrusted to lead Malaysia’s digital economy forward.

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Incorporated in 1996 to oversee the development of the MSC Malaysia initiative, MDEC's primary mandate today is to accelerate the growth of digitally-skilled Malaysians, digitally-powered businesses and digital investments in Malaysia. MDEC is focused on creating inclusive, high-quality growth through the nationwide digitalisation initiatives that are in line with the Government's Shared Prosperity Vision 2030 in line with Malaysia 5.0 and firmly establishing Malaysia as the Heart of Digital ASEAN.

#LetsBuildTogether #DigitalMalaysiaForward

To find out more about MDEC's Digital Economy initiatives, please visit us at www.mdec.my or follow us on:

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