## 'Patient capital' investor, MTDC turns 25

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By Karamjit Singh | Nov 27, 2017

- *First Malaysia public sector VC helped create Malaysian entrepreneur ecosystem*
- *Broad industry focus through 6 funds with total annual disbursements of US$36mil*



"Only MTDC was there to invest in them," says Norhalim Yunus *(pic)*, chief executive officer of Malaysian Technology Development Corporation (MTDC), recalling the early years of the agency that was the first government venture capital company, established in 1992.

AS all my colleagues have stated, in their Fave 5 articles before I wrap the series up with my own favourite five picks here – it has been difficult to pick just a handful of articles as the ones I enjoyed the most. And I was a little surprised that in the end, I had three picks related to government efforts and its agencies, one from our neighbours Indonesia and the other related to the all real reality of the coming of the machines.

And let's start with that story because it is an issue that is now being discussed not just at national level but in homes during family gatherings as well.

### Week in Review: A very human trait, our best defence against the machines

How secure are the jobs our children have today, tomorrow? From parents whose kids are working in legal, finance and journalism, I get asked about how safe those careers are? I have no definite answer but at least since my January 2017 article on Manish Sharma who is responsible for Accenture's global BPO operations, leading a business that employs 260,000 people, I now point everyone to start their journey to cultivate an intellectual curiosity.

Because this is the single key thing that Manish says he looks for in his hiring. Manish should know what he is talking about because over the two year period of 2015-2016, Manish has been able to automate almost 20,000 roles – with not a single job loss for the people whose roles were taken over by robos as Accenture calls its Robotic Process Automation.

Accenture was able to reskill and retrain them to take on new roles, including managing the robos that took over their jobs! I was just blown away by this and Manish attributes intellectual curiosity to being the key to why Accenture was able to retrain and reskill all those people.

And do check out the blog post I hyperlinked to above on what Salesforce, regularly voted as among the best tech companies to work for, thinks about being intellectually curious as well (but after you finish reading my other Fave 5 picks!).

From the possible answer to dealing with the coming of the machines, I want to move on to the very last article I wrote in 2017, which is really about how the Malaysian government is trying to equip our future talent to be ready for any work scenario of the future. And because that future is uncertain, flexibility and agility in our talent is key not being great regurgitators of facts.

### #mydigitalmaker gathers momentum in efforts to create nation of digital producers

And that is why, the national education system, since 2016, has started embedding a computational thinking approach to how children are thought. Borrowing elements from the world of computing, computational thinking is a problem solving approach that mashes creative thinking to the ordered approach of how computers solve tasks. But the government, with Malaysian Digital Economy Corporation (MDEC) taking the lead and working closely with the Ministry of Education and other partners from academia are right now gradually scaling up these efforts and with this being an initiative targeting the young, they are using #mydigitalmaker as the branding for this effort.

I am sure Albert Einstein approves. The famous man is attributed to having said "It is a miracle that curiosity survives formal education." With #mydigitalmaker, curiosity and problem solving could become the cornerstones of our education system, producing a very different set of talent for the future.

And check out the cool Digital Ninjas, a new initiative to find talented youth with digital skills and sharpen their raw talent into becoming world class tech stars.

Sticking to the computing focus, my next pick is about software testing, the boring but critical back-end QC that goes on to ensure that the software we use in our daily lives works smoothly. But I was not writing about software testing per se, rather about how the Malaysian government is playing an active role to ensure it delivers a better user experience for the services it offers and how it is creating a market for entrepreneurs to offer software testing services.

## #mydigitalmaker gathers momentum in efforts to create nation of digital producers

By Karamjit Singh | Dec 30, 2017

- Computational Thinking, Computer Science becoming embedded in Malaysian education curriculum
- Introduction of Digital Ninjas to accelerate progress of technically gifted students



Students who have shown potential in programming, robotics and other digital skills attending a Digital Ninjas programme.

SLIGHTLY over a year after its introduction, #mydigitalmaker, a tripartite public-private-academia initiative has made steady progress in its mission to propel Malaysian youth to move from being users to producers, in the digital economy.

The main focus in trying to create this shift has been to focus on the national education system and injecting strong

### Mampu drives software testing to raise public sector IT quality

Improvement can only come when one acknowledges weaknesses and the need to address those weaknesses. And that is what I like about this article on Mampu, the Malaysian Administrative Modernisation and Management Planning Unit that is the defacto ICT lead agency for the government.

A Mampu executive acknowledges that poor ICT knowledge in government has been identified as a key weakness: "In many [IT] projects, the quality has not been up to our expectations. The fault there lies with poor project management skills on the part of the various government agencies that undertake these projects that are intended to deliver better services."

Besides upgrading its capabilities in this area, working closely with the Malaysian Software Testing Board (MSTB), Mampu is also raising the bar. It is working with the Ministry of Finance to tighten a procurement circular that since 2013 has encouraged all government agencies embarking on software development projects deemed to be critical and of high impact to deploy third party testing. Instead of "encouraging" third party testing, Mampu wants to make it mandatory for critical and high impact projects go through an independent verification and validation (IVV) to ensure the software works seamlessly. A leading global authority on software testing even told me that this initiative could be a game changer for Malaysia. Let's hope it achieves its objectives.

### 'Patient capital' investor, MTDC turns 25

With my fourth pick, I want to highlight the good work being done by Malaysian Technology Development Corporation (MTDC), a funding and development agency that has been around for a quiet but impactful 25 years.

At DNA, we tend to cover a lot of the work being done by the likes of Cradle, MDEC and MaGIC but MTDC, which does equally important work in building the ecosystem, tends to slip under our coverage ambit as it has an entire ecosystem focus and not just the tech space. But its tech investments have done very well for it, including its very first investment into a tech company, Globetronics Bhd, in which it still has a stake and has been reaping the rewards of its early investment with a steady stream of dividends since Globetronics got listed in Nov 1997.

While it invested into Globetronics, that investment was seen more as an investment into an engineering company and it is really from 2014 that is has started making more mainstream tech investments in areas such as super computing, robotics and automation. And actually one of its automation investments is into a very exciting company that is heading for a listing and is making automation machines for the likes of Tesla and one of the world's top tech companies. Do read this article to get a better sense of the quiet role MTDC is playing in shaping Malaysia's entrepreneurial ecosystem.

And for my final pick, I want to highlight the role a Brick & Mortar entrepreneur is playing to help accelerate Indonesia's startup ecosystem.

### Michael Widjaja wants to nourish talent pool to power Indonesia's digital ambitions

For this article, I flew into Jakarta for a lighting visit to interview Michael Widjaja, The grandson of one of Indonesia's richest men, Eka Tjipta Widjaja, who built a corporate empire, Sinar Mas Group, that spans almost every major industry in Indonesia, all of it Brick & Mortar based with 13 of its entities listed.

But thanks to a Dec 2015 conversation he had with a friend, who happens to be one of the leading venture capitalists in Indonesia, Michael started learning more about the startup ecosystem and larger digital economy and became convinced that it was going to reshape many of the businesses in the group.

And since he heads the property arm, Sinarmas Land, that is the vehicle he is using to make a contribution to Indonesia's digital ambitions. He has committed to plough in US$524 million (RM2.04 billion) into building Digital Hub in Bumi Serpong Damai (BSD), South Tangerang, a city of 1.4 million in Banten province that is part of Greater Jakarta. The local media however has given it the decidedly sexier moniker, 'Indonesia's Silicon Valley'.

While he looked to the US and hired the architect of Amazon's headquarters to help design his futuristic Digital Hub that he hopes will become the future heart of Indonesia's startup ecosystem, Michael has also looked to Malaysia for inspiration in how we have gone about building our startup ecosystem.

But naturally he aims to do better than Malaysia, and faster as well. And I wish him luck. And as he reaches out to various ecosystem players such as accelerators to come be part of his Digital Hub I hope he looks across the Straits of Malacca to partner with some Malaysian players as well.

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