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OpenGov Leadership Forum Aims for Digital Transformation

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Digital Transformation is now a central theme for the nation as Malaysia aspires to become a digital driven economy by the year 2020, with the digital economy expected to contribute about 20% to the country's GDP. But in order to achieve this vision, government agencies, departments and partners have to take advantage of new and emerging technologies to drive innovation and streamline operations.

In a digitally defined economy, data is the new currency. There is no doubt that the government understands that data needs to be at the heart of the digital transformation. As far back as 2013 at the 25th MSC Malaysia Implementation meeting the Prime Minister set clear goals for MAMPU and MDeC to develop Malaysia's Big Data Capability. This included developing the nation's Big Data Framework and building four key Big Data Initiatives. Moreover, goals were set for other key areas of transformation including the IOT, Smart Cities, Open Data, E-Commerce as well as Social Media and Mobile applications.

Speaking at the Malaysia OpenGov Leadership Forum 2017, Dato' Dr. Mazlan Yusoff, Director General of the Malaysian Administrative Modernisation And Management Planning Unit (MAMPU), stated that the Malaysian government expects the nation to move into the top 15 ranking in the Online Services Index (OSI) under the United Nations E-Government Survey from its current ranking of 40, and to be in the top 30 in the Open Data Barometer (ODB) by the year 2020, up from its 2015 ranking of 51.

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The OpenGov Leadership Forum is held annually to provide a platform for leaders and senior officials from different areas of the Public Sector, Ministries, State Government, GLC, Healthcare, Transportation, Oil & Gas and Enterprise Groups to connect and collaborate with their local and international counterparts and leading industry experts. Among the highlights of the forum are the keynotes and case studies by international and local speakers, panel discussions, as well as OpenGov's award winning Open Dialogue Table (ODT) discussions which allow open and engaging conversations, addressing the most important policy, management and leadership issues surrounding the future of digital government and the role of the public-sector CIO. The theme for this year's forum, held at the held at the Putrajaya Marriott Hotel, was "Riding the Transformation Wave: Digital First, Citizen Focused".

More on the ODT sessions, there are around 16 tables and each table features a different topic. The main areas of focus include relevant issues concerning cyber security, Big Data and predictive analytics, Gov Cloud (IaaS), data privacy, BYOD, mobility and the IoT to name a few. Delegates are divided into groups and each dialogue lasts for 30 minutes, after which they rotate from table to table. Each table is hosted and moderated by an expert government and industry leader—representatives from event partners and major players in the IT industry such as NetApp, Glocomp, Veeam, Lenovo, Red Hat, Dell EMC and Intel. This unique format allows delegates to share and create fruitful conversations, to relate their stories and contribute to meaningful solution outcomes in an intimate group setting.

From the many discussions, it was clear that at the moment, different government agencies are at different stages of digitization and they are, for the most part, operating in their own silos. Some industries are ready to embrace the change, but certain constraints had been holding them back. But as mentioned by OpenGov Asia Editor-in-chief, Mohit Sagar, at the start of the proceedings, there needs to be a focus on the outcome rather than the process. Companies like NetApp, for example, is working with the Malaysian government to integrate their Data Fabric system to accelerate growth of digital economy in Malaysia. With Data Fabric, they aim to create a platform for different agencies to communicate with each other and share data by reducing, perhaps even eliminating silos.

Whilst the technology is readily available, Malaysia still has a long way in terms of fully utilizing and harnessing the power of all this data we are collecting. But the government's push towards Open Data and inter agency data sharing to promote collaboration, openness and interconnectedness between the different government agencies, may actually spur the change towards a more digitized, transparent, efficient, accessible and citizen-centric services from the public sector.