



PRESS STATEMENT

SKILLS ARE THE CURRENCY OF OUR FUTURE: DIGITAL UPSKILLING IS VITAL AS WE NAVIGATE THE RAPIDLY EVOLVING DIGITAL ECONOMY

Putrajaya, 27th August 2021

The high-velocity digital adoption in various sectors under the COVID-19 pandemic situation has intensified the need for Malaysia and the rest of the world to produce skilled talents capable of participating in the development and deployment of digital technology. The unprecedented growing demand in specialised digital skills results in a considerable talent gap that requires rapid upskilling within companies and provides new opportunities for talents.

The matter was discussed at a panel session yesterday, organised by the Strategic Change Management Office (SCMO), the government agency overseeing the implementation of the MyDIGITAL initiative, and the Social & Economic Research Initiative (SERI), in collaboration with Microsoft Malaysia. The panel members were **Dr. Sumitra Nair**, Vice President and Head of Digital Skills & Jobs at the Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation (MDEC), **Mr. Aadrin Azly**, Chief Digital Officer of

Petronas and **Professor Elizabeth Lee**, CEO of Sunway Education Group. The session was moderated by **Dr. Helmy Haja Mydin**, the CEO of SERI.

The panel session, themed '**Digital Talent in the New, Now & Never Normal: Are Skills the Currency of the Future?**', is a follow-up to the release of the SCMO-SERI Digital Talent Survey and the Engagement Session on 17th August 2021. In his welcoming remarks, Mr. Fabian Bigar, the CEO of SCMO, highlighted the importance of streamlining the efforts by the government, the private sector and academia to develop a pool of advanced digital talents. The speakers at the panel session represented these three corners of digital talent development.

Multi-stakeholder collaboration is the key to address the evolving demand of digital talents. Tertiary education institutions must allow the private sector to get closely involved in the design and accreditation of digital courses in order to enhance the employability of graduates. Meanwhile, the private sector must also be more open to providing incubation and learning opportunities for undergraduates to gain hands-on exposure. All of these must happen systematically, anchored on agile and flexible policy decisions.

The existing workforce are also encouraged to embrace a growth mindset and continuously learn by upskilling themselves and acquiring specialised digital skills according to the current trends. They can no longer solely rely on employers to provide training in order to gain new skills. At the same time, the training and academic institutions under the public and private sectors are called upon to enhance the quality of digital talents in Malaysia by offering short-term and medium-term courses for

professional certifications in high demand digital skills such as big data analytics, data science, cloud computing and digital marketing.

Having appropriate digital skills and certifications would enable digital talents in Malaysia to gain better prospects in the local digital scene as well as global, since physical location is no longer a barrier in digital operations.

The Digital Talent Survey released by SCMO and SERI had highlighted the following findings:-

- The top two barriers to having adequate and sufficient digital talent were: skills gaps in the local labour market and inability to attract specialised talents.
- Big Data Analytics and Digital Marketing were the digital skills most sought after by employers, followed by Artificial Intelligence, Data Science, Cybersecurity, and Cloud Computing.
- Critical thinking and analysis, analytical thinking and innovation, and collaboration topped the list of soft skills, followed by English proficiency, and communication.
- On average, only 4.8% of respondents felt that the existing labour market fully meets their digital talent needs.
- According to survey respondents, the following are the tech roles which tend to remain vacant for more than three months: Big Data Analytics, Data Science, Cybersecurity, Artificial Intelligence, Cloud Computing.

The Digital Talent Survey report can be accessed [here](#), and the link to the recording of yesterday's discussion can be accessed [here](#) and [here](#).

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About the Strategic Change Management Office (SCMO)

The SCMO is an agency under the Economic Planning Unit entrusted to ensure the delivery of the initiatives spelled out in the Malaysia Digital Economic Blueprint and the National 4IR Policy.

About the Social & Economic Research Initiative

SERI is a non-partisan think-tank dedicated to the promotion of evidence-based policies that address issues of inequality. For more information, please visit seri.my

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