

LETTER | Time for laws to catch up with the digital economy

Malaysiakini

03 October 2022

Koh Chun Kong

LETTER | Recently, the government has accelerated its drive towards achieving Industrial Revolution 4.0 (IR4.0), which is in line with the Malaysia Digital Economy Blueprint (MDEB).

For example, last month, MyDigital Corporation and Accenture Malaysia inked an agreement on this in an event witnessed by Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Economy) Mustapa Mohamed.

This drive, which came amid a rapid return to economic “normalcy” post-pandemic, has also ignited a heated debate online about the need for changes in regulations to support the growth of the digital economy.

Among the concerns is the need to balance access to information against privacy. Some have argued that Malaysia needs an “Access to Information (ATI)” Act as well as amendments or a repeal of the Official Secrets Act (OSA) 1972. These are

legislative and political questions that are worthy of consideration.

Based on news reports, the meeting of the National Digital Economy and the Fourth Industrial Revolution Council (MED4IRN) on 6 September 2022 - which was chaired by no less than Prime Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob - has agreed to implement strategies related to the development of an Omnibus Act.

This will include a Public Sector (Data Sharing) Act through the Public Sector Data Sharing Policy (DPDSA) and the National Data Sharing Policy (NDSP) to improve the country's data-sharing ecosystem to be more conducive.

These two initiatives are in line with the MDEB's objectives in acknowledging open data as part of the requirements for the country's digital transformation. The MDEB outlines the country's pathway to becoming a digital economy and embracing IR4.0.

For now, little is known about the Omnibus Act but we hope that it will address the issue of ATI and provide more stringent privacy laws in accordance with Malaysia's national security needs.

However, what is clear is that Malaysia will certainly be better off if the MDEB is successfully realised than not.

As to whether there's a need to amend or repeal the OSA, it is a political decision, best tackled by the government of the day and the legislature. But the fact that there are passionate discussions in cyberspace on laws relating to this new economic frontier is a good indication that we are keen to embrace IR4.0 and the digital economy.

Copyright © 1999-2012 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd

Source: <https://www.malaysiakini.com/letters/637943>