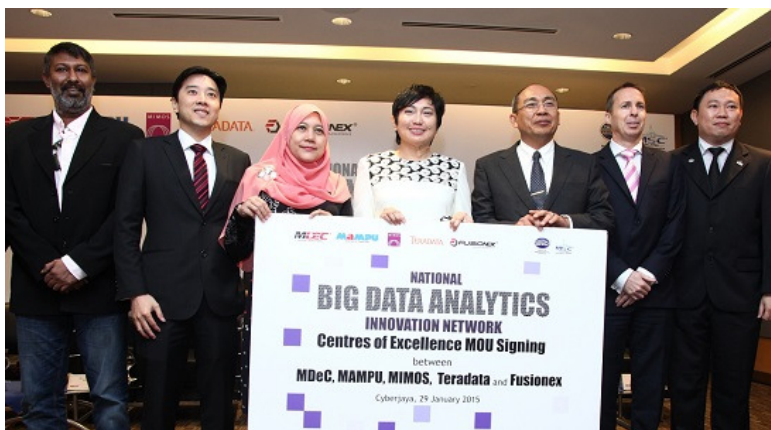


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Big data: Malaysia takes 'small but significant' first step

Goh Thean Eu Jan 30, 2015

- **National network brings private and public sectors together to drive adoption**
- **Big data analytics adoption in Malaysia still at 'infancy stage'**



Big data team-up (l-r): Dinesh Nair, director of Developer Experience and Evangelism at Microsoft Malaysia; Ivan Teh, CEO of Fusionex; Dr Suhazimah Binti Dzazali, Deputy General of Mampu; Yasmin Mahmood, CEO of MDeC; Abdul Wahab Abdullah, president and CEO of Mimos; Craig Morrison, country general manager of Teradata Malaysia; and Dr Karl Ng Kah Hou, director of innovation capital at MDeC.

NATIONAL ICT custodian Multimedia Development Corporation (MDeC) has launched the National Big Data Analytics (BDA) Innovation Network, a move it describes as a "small, but a very significant first step" towards transforming Malaysia into a South-East Asian big data analytics hub.

"This initiative focuses on bringing together private and public partnership to [create] a critical mass of resources to drive big data analytics adoption and innovation," MDeC chief executive officer Yasmin Mahmood told a media briefing in Cyberjaya on Jan 29.

The first collaboration coming out from the National BDA Innovation Network involves the setting up of a network of big data innovation Centres of Excellence (COEs).

According to Yasmin, these COEs would not be mere physical manifestations.

"The primary objective of the COE is to churn out proofs-of-concept and high-impact projects. They need to make BDA a reality, to be used and adopted.

"To do that, these projects have to be able to address problems and opportunities faced by communities, the public or the private sector," she added.

At the Cyberjaya event, MDeC also signed three memoranda of understanding with government and industry players, including Teradata Corporation Malaysia Sdn Bhd, Fusionex International Plc, the Malaysian Administrative Modernisation and Management Planning Unit (Mampu), and Mimos Bhd.

The MoUs with Teradata and Fusionex involve setting up industry-driven COEs, while the MoUs with Mampu and Mimos are for establishing a BDA Digital Government Lab.

Yasmin said that about 50 data science professionals, including 15 data scientists, will be involved in the National BDA COEs.

They will be working on several high impact projects such as dengue prediction and prevention, fighting organised crime and drug trafficking, as well reducing the country's tax gap by pinpointing tax fraud through predictive analytics.

Adoption still at infancy stage

According to Yasmin, one of the main reasons behind the launch of the National BDA Innovation Network, as well as the establishment of BDA Innovation COEs, was to accelerate adoption.

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"Malaysia's adoption of big data analytics is still very much at the infancy stage," she said.

Yasmin said that MDeC conducted a study with research and analyst firm IDC, which looked at the "maturity model" of big data analytics in Malaysia.

"In the study, it was revealed that we are still in the Stage One category. There are five stages, and Malaysia is not even at Stage Two ... we are only just about to enter Stage Two.

"Stage Two describes a scenario where people are interested in BDA – they are curious about it, but are not adopting it in a serious manner," she said.

She said that this slow adoption could be due to a few factors, such as lack of awareness of the benefits of big data analytics, the unwillingness of certain organisations to open up their data, insufficient human capital, the lack of success stories, and others.

Meanwhile, Teradata Corporation Malaysia country manager Craig Morrison said that big data analytics could benefit a country like Malaysia in many different ways.

For example, one could use it to predict, with a high degree of accuracy, where the next dengue outbreak will be. This will be useful when deciding how to allocate medical supplies and personnel, he said.

Govt and open data reluctance

However, in order for the above to happen, various ministries and agencies would need to work hand-in-hand, and be willing to share their data. For example, if there is a correlation between dengue cases and construction sites or weather patterns, then the parties overseeing these areas would need to share their data for deeper analysis.

Are ministries willing to share their valuable data?

"This (the BDA network) has been endorsed all the way up at the Prime Minister's level, because (the Government) knows that data sets will drive Malaysia to a new level," said Yasmin *(pic)*.

"However, the comfort level of various ministries in opening up their data sets needs to be worked on," she admitted.



"So instead of us going out there and telling them 'Lets open up data sets,' we will, via the COE, tell them (the ministries and agencies), 'These are the benefits; this can be applied if you open certain up data sets.'

"We hope that this can help ministries see the benefits of opening up their data sets," she added.

Mampu will also play a role in advising, encouraging and educating various ministries on opening up their data sets.

Meanwhile, speaking about the BDA Digital Government Lab, Mimos president and chief executive officer Abdul Wahab Abdullah said that 66 pieces of intellectual property from Mimos' labs will be integrated into 20 technology platforms to be used in government BDA solutions.

"Currently, we are planning to deploy five high-impact proof-of-concept solutions with the support of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation, which will create business opportunities for local entrepreneurs," he declared.

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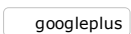
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