

The Week That Was: Getting up to speed

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Muhyiddin says giant tech companies wanted to turn Malaysia into a regional IT hub. — The Star

WHILE the country is making strides in digitisation – from moving the census to online to a speedier train ticketing system – it still has a way to go.

Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin said giant tech companies wanted to turn Malaysia into a regional IT hub but the country lacked the necessary infrastructure.

During a town hall session with civil servants in Johor, he revealed that the companies he had a discussion with include Microsoft, Amazon and Google.

One of the main issues is Internet coverage, he said, citing 18-year-old Universiti Malaysia Sabah student Veveonah Mosibin, who had to climb up a tree to get a better connection for her studies, as an example.

However, he said the federal and state governments have the political will to improve connectivity through new policies.

Also, the country has to go high-tech for it to become a high-income nation, he said at the launch of the National Technology and Innovation Sandbox (NTIS).

NTIS will allow companies to carry out projects in a sandbox or controlled environment to spearhead technologies such artificial intelligence, drones, robotics and 5G.

Six pilot projects have been identified under the initiative, including a delivery robot for hospitals, a scalable semi-ventilator to assist patients with breathing difficulties, and a drone to automate high-precision pesticide spraying.

Meanwhile, the Statistics Department's Malaysia Population and Housing Census 2020 has not received enough responses.

The e-census, which kicked off on July 7, was targeted to get 10 million responses in the first phase which ends on Sept 30 but has yet to hit 10%.

Its chief statistician Datuk Seri Dr Mohd Uzir Mahidin said the number of households filling up the form have yet to reach one million.

The low uptake was likely due to the long census period, which is causing people to procrastinate, he speculated.

He urged the public not to delay – if too many waited till the deadline to respond, the system will be overwhelmed.

The second and final phase, which involves face-to-face interviews, will be carried out from Oct 7 to 24.

The e-census, now in its sixth edition, involves about 32.7 million people and nine million homes.

The government also felt the need for parents to keep up with technology so they can monitor their kids' online activities.

The Cyber Parenting Skills module, developed by CyberSecurity Malaysia, will also teach parents to keep their children safe online.

Communications and Multimedia Minister Datuk Saifuddin Abdullah said such a training was timely as smartphone usage was becoming the norm among children, according to a Bernama report.

The training is necessary because parents have to keep up with the advances of the Internet and ensure their children are making the best use of their time online, he added.

To keep up with its passengers, Keretapi Tanah Melayu Bhd (KTMB) has relaunched its online ticketing system.

KTMB CEO Datuk Kamarulzaman Zainal said the previous system had trouble coping with high user traffic.

Last November, KTMB's system crashed after advance ticket sales were announced for the year-end holidays.

At peak volume, it claimed 400,000 users accessed the system simultaneously.

The new KTMB Integrated Ticketing System (Kits) is Cloud-based and also more secure, said Kamarulzaman.

Users, even those that had registered with the old system, will have to sign up with Kits again and get a Passenger Name Record (PNR) number to be able to purchase tickets.

The national railway company hoped the new system will help reduce congestion at its physical kiosks.

While more companies are going digital, the maker of contact tracing service Selangkah is taking a step back and for good reasons.

Selangkah is offering QR codes to people with disabilities (OKU) so they can use it to check in at business premises.

The QR code can be printed out or saved as an image on the phone, and presented at an outlet to be scanned by the staff.

This inclusive solution is expected to make the process easier as the OKU may find it difficult to scan the QR code displayed at shops.

