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Road to net-zero carbon emission

Improving energy efficiency requires industries to play their part, writes **Nur Zarina Othman**



Malaysia is committed to a 45 per cent reduction in overall carbon intensity by 2030.

CAN Malaysia achieve net-zero carbon emission by 2050? To do so requires enormous long-term resolve, besides changing people's lifestyles and energy consumption habits.

Realising the threats posed by global warming, such as frequent and prolonged droughts, climate change and rising sea levels, developed countries adopted the 1997 Kyoto Protocol to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Later, at the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference in France, many nations signed the Paris Agreement to gradually reduce their carbon emissions to zero by 2050 so that global warming does not exceed 1.5°C.

This was especially significant with the participation of the United States and China, the biggest emitters of greenhouse gases.

Malaysia, in supporting the net-zero carbon goal, committed to a 45 per cent reduction in the overall carbon intensity of



Malaysia's Fourth Industrial Revolution agenda promotes digitalisation and an energy-efficient building industry.

its economy by 2030.

The country believes a net-zero carbon economy also involves transition to renewable and non-polluting sources of energy.

However, despite increasing emphasis on sustainability, organisations still lack a comprehensive strategy and are struggling to integrate their data to set targets and navigate external challenges, such as strict regulations.

GOVERNANCE AND POLICY

As our business environment becomes increasingly competitive, organisations need to adopt sustainable practices that not only address environmental challenges, but also drive growth and innovation.

At Schneider Electric's Innovation Day 2022, Electrical and Electronics Association of Malaysia vice-president Kok Yen Kwan said the country has been recognised as one of 17 megadiverse nations by The World Conservation Monitoring Centre for its efforts in conserving biodiversity. However, moving forward, he said, Malaysia needed to develop energy-use strategies that don't endanger its future.

He added that now is the time for the

government and business community to collaborate on creating an environmentally friendly and digitised future.

In realising this, the government through a combination of policies, incentives and regulations, has taken significant steps, positioning Malaysia as a strong advocate for sustainability programmes like the Green Technology Master Plan 2017-2030.

The plan aims to establish a framework for integrating green technology into planned developments as well as embracing the four pillars of the National Green Technology Policy.

However, a study titled "Asean Digital Transformation Study 2022" by Kyndryl (a global information technology infrastructure services provider) and Ecosystem (a technology research and advisory company), found that Asean organisations are aware of their responsibilities in balancing between sustainability and profitability, but there are still obstacles that prevent them from setting and achieving sustainability goals.

The survey, which had 500 C-suite respondents, also found that environmental, social and governance awareness is increasing rapidly in the region.

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The Asean Digital Transformation Study 2022 found that environmental, social and governance (ESG) awareness is increasing in member nations.



Businesses in Malaysia now bear a great deal of responsibility in balancing the long-term implications of a net-zero carbon future.



A panel discussion during Schneider Electric's Innovation Day 2022.

Ninety-nine per cent of the components in Vero's 15.6-inch display panel can be recycled.



Balancing net-zero future and bottomline

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THE BUSINESS

Despite the challenges, with today's innovation, Malaysian businesses have the opportunity to lead climate action, use technology to create efficiency, expand market share in a sustainable manner and generate higher long-term business returns.

Schneider Electric Malaysia country general manager Eugene Quah said firms must adopt sustainable practices as they are ethical, and it can be done immediately since the tools are available.

"Businesses must look at adopting sustainability practices, not only due to their benefits, but also because it is the right thing to do. To achieve this, we can use technology in today's market, thus enabling us to make smarter, faster and precise decisions," he said.

Although organisations have the means, the Kyndryl survey indicated that their sustainability programmes are still in the early stages.

"While sustainability is an integral part of many businesses in Asean countries, there is a lot more that needs to be done to build sustainability competencies and fully understand what data organisations have access to, and identify the data gaps to support corporate sustainability goals," said Ecosystem chief executive officer Ullrich Loeffler.

CHOOSING SUSTAINABILITY

We are aware that technology firms are the world's largest energy consumers.

As digital transformation and automation become sophisticated, they will require more computing capacity, hence higher demand for energy and resources. This has caught the attention of environmental groups and consumers who are concerned about climate change.

From electrical and safety standards, more products are being designed to be recyclable to comply with evolving regulations.

Acer Malaysia, for one, recently introduced new specifications in its eco-minded Aspire Vero laptops that are not too expensive.

"Sustainability does not have to be costly, and we believe choosing green is only possible when we make green products affordable. Our goal is to raise environmental awareness through standout design and uncompromising performance in a device affordable to all.

"By doing this, we can widen the positive impact on the environment together with our customers," said Acer Malaysia director of consumer business, product and marketing Johnson Seet.

To extend its product lifespan, the new Aspire Vero laptops have an easy-to-upgrade and repair design, besides using ocean-bound plastic for its touchpad that has a glassy feel, providing users with a better tactile experience.

DRIVING CHANGE

Electric vehicles (EVs) are a boon for sustainability in the transportation industry. Although the use of EV is in the infancy stage, especially in the country, it is reported that the EV market in Malaysia is expected to grow 12.46 per cent annually, reaching RM140 million in 2027.

However, key players say that EV manufacturing requires significant investment, proving to be less commercially viable.

Schneider Electric Asia-Pacific business development manager for e-mobility, Adrian Duque said awareness and readiness are keys to a successful transition, especially in adopting EV technology.

"We have the software and the hardware that can meet all the different needs of EV. However, without knowledge, the use of EV will still be low. This is something that only the government can help address — with ready facilities, more people will feel confident in using EV, thus increasing its usage naturally," said Duque at the Asean Smart City Summit recently.

Volvo recently launched its fully electric EX90 model for the Malaysian market.

Recognising the plight of EV owners, Volvo has integrated the public-charging experience into its Volvo Cars app, directing vehicle owners to hundreds of thousands public charging points around the world on a single, simple interface.

Its chief executive Jim Rowan said the new EX90 is its vision of a large family sports utility vehicle in the electric age.

"Born electric and software-defined, it demonstrates what future Volvo cars will stand for in terms of tech, safety, sustainability and design to create a more personal experience for every customer," said Rowan, adding that the Volvo EX90 will support the manufacturer's "Plug-and-Charge" feature once it is available.

Car owners can plug in their cars to a

public charger that is compatible with this technology, and the charging process will begin immediately along with payment.

Rowan added that users can also check the real-time availability of charging points via Google Maps in the centre screen of the car's infotainment system.

The app is also the starting point for home energy management, which aims to reduce CO₂ emission, save money and lower the environmental impact.

MAKING THE CALL

The road to net-zero carbon by 2050 is incomplete without the involvement of the media and telecommunication industries.

While sustainability initiatives are yet to mature, the telecommunication and utilities industries should lead the way with their strategies and initiatives.

Other industries that implemented smaller eco-friendly measures have seen early success, such as retail businesses, which focused on reducing the use of plastic packaging and buying locally to reduce their carbon footprint.

Kyndryl Malaysia managing director Joey Mak said: "I believe the success of sustainability lies in how well an organisation can integrate its people, processes and technology to achieve a common goal.

"To achieve this goal, we need to put people at the centre and embed sustainability principles in all levels of the organisation culture," said Mak, adding that businesses in Malaysia bear a great deal of responsibility in balancing the long-term imperative of a net-zero carbon future.

"As Asean is predicted to become the fourth largest economy in the world by 2030, there is a huge responsibility for businesses in Malaysia to balance the long-term imperative of a net-zero future with the short-term need to safeguard the bottom line," he said.



Volvo has integrated public charging into its Volvo Cars app.

DISEDIAKAN OLEH

1-NOR SURIANI BINTI MOHD ZIN (S44), BPM

2-CARLOS LINTON (S19), BPM

UNIT PERPUSTAKAAN, BPM