



TM LEADS CHARGE IN MALAYSIA'S DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION JOURNEY

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In a rapidly evolving technological landscape, Telekom Malaysia Bhd (KL: TM) has positioned itself as a pivotal force, proactively powering Malaysia's digital transformation journey. Demonstrating resilience amidst fierce competition, TM concluded its financial year 2024 with a steady performance, marked by a modest revenue growth at RM11.71 billion, and a net profit growth of 7.8% to RM2.02 billion.

Yet, beneath these figures lies TM's deeper strategic vision: fortifying its core businesses — Business to Consumer (B2C) via Unifi, Business to Business (B2B) via TM One, and Carrier to Carrier (C2C) via TM Global while systematically expanding into transformative sectors such as data centres, artificial intelligence (AI), GPU-as-a-Service (GPUaaS) and smart city solutions. At the same time, the company maintains the position as the convergence champion with the only quad-play services in the country.

"Our performance clearly demonstrates our resilience and adaptability," asserts Managing Director and Group CEO Amar Huzaimi Md Deris during an interview with The Edge. "Our strong core businesses enable us to venture confidently into new domains, adding substantial value for shareholders."

Evolving digital infrastructure

With its roots extending nearly eight decades, TM's role has significantly evolved, from analogue telephony towards a central player in digital infrastructure, capable of meeting modern, complex demands.

TM's extensive investments underline this evolution, allocating over RM2 billion annually in CAPEX, predominantly towards enhancing domestic digital infrastructure. Fibre network expansion, advanced data centres, and submarine cable systems constitute integral elements of TM's comprehensive plan to solidify Malaysia's standing as a regional digital hub.

Amar envisions TM as not merely a provider of technological infrastructure, but as an essential enabler and catalyst for a vibrant digital ecosystem, connecting Malaysia to the world and the world to us.

"Think of it as preparing a stage — everyone is invited to perform," he explains, underscoring TM's commitment to an open-platform strategy, designed to accelerate digital adoption across Malaysia.

Strategic expansion in data centres

Central to this strategic approach are TM's data centre initiatives, notably its pioneering development in Johor, strategically positioned near Singapore to serve as an ideal digital gateway.

"We recognised Johor's potential early and built the largest data centre there in 2017," Amar notes. Today, the company continues this trajectory, collaborating with Singtel's Nxera, to develop a significant new data centre scalable up to 200 megawatts in Johor. This project directly addresses escalating regional demands from sectors driven by AI, cloud services, and fintech. Additionally, TM has continuously invested in enhancing data centre capabilities, building interconnected facilities that offer seamless connectivity across the region.

These facilities not only support local enterprises but also cater to global hyperscalers, positioning Malaysia as a competitive alternative for digital infrastructure needs compared to regional powerhouses like Singapore and Hong Kong.

TM's commitment extends beyond technological prowess to sustainable practices, integrating green innovations into its local data centres. It sources half of its energy from renewable resources as well as incorporates rainwater harvesting and recycling systems for water conservation.

The company also targets global benchmarks with a planned power usage effectiveness (PUE) of 1.4 for its expansion projects. The new Johor data centre is designed to achieve even lower PUE levels, reducing overall energy consumption.

Technologies such as intelligent cooling systems, solar panels and energy-efficient servers further reduce environmental impact and operational costs, ensuring TM's growth aligns with global sustainability objectives.

"We believe sustainability is fundamental, not just an afterthought," emphasises Amar. "Our goal is to grow responsibly, delivering technology that benefits both the economy and the environment."

Empowering MSMEs for growth

Recognising MSMEs as crucial drivers of economic growth, TM extends tailored digital solutions to this vital sector. Via Unifi Business, the company supports more than 400,000 MSMEs nationwide, providing comprehensive digital services including cybersecurity, digital marketing, automation tools, and cloud solutions.

"TM's proactive support extends further, guiding and hand-holding MSMEs through the complexities of digital transformation, from awareness and onboarding to adoption, empowering them to thrive and grow," said Amar.

As MSMEs often face significant hurdles in accessing advanced technologies due to limited resources, TM bridges this gap by delivering cost-effective, scalable solutions tailored to their needs. Its Digital Marketing Solutions (DMS), Malaysia's first-ever instalment-based marketing plan, makes it easier for MSMEs to access comprehensive digital advertising services without financial strain.

Additionally, with a "Do-it-for-you" service, the company ensures that their campaign is handled by certified marketing experts covering end-to-end marketing campaign from strategy and creative design to performance analysis.

Together, these efforts enable MSMEs not just to adopt digital technologies but also to compete effectively in an increasingly digital market.

Innovation at core

Amar's leadership philosophy, deeply integrated into TM's corporate culture, is defined by innovation and collaboration. He views himself not only

as a traditional CEO but as the "chief innovator," responsible for fostering a vibrant environment that encourages creative thinking and technological advancement.

"Innovation must be both pioneering and impactful," Amar reiterates. This ethos forms the cornerstone of TM's PWR 2030 strategy as part of its aspiration to become a Digital Powerhouse by 2030, which emphasises pioneering innovation, winning impactful projects, and revitalising talent.

Within TM, this culture of innovation is embodied through initiatives like the AI Centre of Excellence — a lean team responsible for developing AI-driven solutions by leveraging its new GPUaaS offering. This has enabled in-house initiatives such as self-healing network systems, predictive analytics and also AI-driven real-time detection programme that is capable of preventing and reducing damage to TM's fibre.

These innovations benefit not only TM internally but are also commercialised externally across diverse industries, including manufacturing, utilities, and plantation, showcasing practical, revenue-enhancing applications of AI technology.

Reflecting on his tenure, Amar emphasises the values of perseverance and humility, recognising the inherent uncertainties involved in leading such an ambitious transformation.



TM One's Innovation Lab & Enterprise 5G lab offer a secure, collaborative space where TM, its customers and partners can turn ideas into tailor-made solutions.

"Driving innovation within a large organisation requires courage," Amar acknowledges, adding, "I always focus on the long-term, resisting short-term pressures typical in corporate environments."

Under Amar's guidance, TM has demonstrated a strategic foresight in planning and executing large-scale infrastructure projects. This meticulous approach ensures that initiatives are sustainable, economically viable, and capable of delivering consistent long-term benefits, even as industry dynamics evolve.

Digital inclusivity and nation-building

TM's overarching ambition extends well beyond immediate technological advancements, it seeks to lay a robust foundation for Malaysia's broader digital economy. By investing strategically in fibre connectivity, advanced data centres, and international connectivity infrastructure, TM aims to position Malaysia as a key regional digital hub, attractive to both local and international players.

Moreover, TM's dedication to digital inclusivity ensures connectivity reaches underserved areas through collaborations with government initiatives such as the National Information Dissemination Centre (NADI) and Jendela programme. This commitment underscores TM's integral role in nation-building, where technology serves as a powerful equaliser – touching lives across communities and enabling greater opportunities for all Malaysians.

Ultimately, TM's comprehensive vision encapsulates more than mere business objectives, it embodies a broader mission of collective empowerment through digital transformation.

As Amar succinctly summarises, "We are building the infrastructure today to power the digital dreams of tomorrow." Through innovation, collaboration, and sustainable practices, TM is not just connecting dots; it is empowering Malaysia's future, profoundly reshaping the nation's economic and digital landscape.

“We are building the infrastructure today to power the digital dreams of tomorrow.”



"Salam Teristimewa", a special campaign that brings creativity, inclusion and innovation together to celebrate the unique talents of Malaysia's autistic community.

FROM SCHOLARS TO INDUSTRY SHAPERS

Telekom Malaysia Bhd (KL: TM) has long seen itself as more than just a business entity. It has been a nation-builder, investing in the country's future through talent development, community initiatives, and digital empowerment.

In a world where corporations often prioritise profit over purpose, TM stands apart, demonstrating that success and achieving higher purpose can go hand in hand. At the helm is Amar Huzaimi Md Deris, the clearest example of TM's commitment to nurturing and uplifting Malaysian talent. A product of TM's scholarship programme in the 1990s, Amar's journey from young scholar to Managing Director and Group CEO epitomises the company's long-standing belief that investing in people is the most powerful way to serve the nation.

"Our purpose has always been clear: empowering Malaysia by positioning it as a digital hub, extending beyond mere connectivity into a holistic digital ecosystem," says Amar.

Amar is a quintessential TM insider, a career-long employee who has risen through the ranks, embodying the advantages and virtues of "homegrown" leadership. His tenure as Group CEO represents a culmination of decades-long grooming by the company itself, underpinned by his early education funded by TM's scholarship initiatives. In fact, the management team is made up of TM scholars and a healthy mix of external talents, collaborating synergistically with the Board to successfully steer the company forward. This formidable formation is key to the company's Digital Powerhouse aspiration.

"Companies that make the leap to greatness tend to have leaders from internal who understand the company's history and culture, crucial to build a sustainable business over long term," Amar explains, citing the influential book *From Good to Great*. "Leaders familiar with the company's culture and its nuances can navigate change more smoothly. You don't lose time in discovery mode." Indeed, TM's focus on nurturing talent internally through initiatives like Yayasan Telekom Malaysia (YTM) has quietly laid the groundwork for the company's ongoing evolution. Since 30 years ago, TM has contributed RM641 million to nurture close to 19,000 talents, many of whom now play key roles in the broader digital economy of Malaysia.

"We don't always keep our talent confined to TM. We actively push them into the broader ecosystem," Amar points out. "Some of our scholars have moved into prominent roles elsewhere, including in renowned national institutions. That's success, too, as we are contributing broadly to Malaysia's growth."

The scale and consistency of TM's investment in human capital development is notable as it continues to fund education for deserving Malaysians. "I was one of the beneficiaries myself," Amar shares. "The foundation TM laid in me when I was a young scholar is what enabled me to rise to where I am today."

Serving the community

As Malaysia moves toward its digital economy targets outlined in the government's "Ekonomi Madani" framework, TM is committed to ensuring equitable digital access including to the rural areas in fostering inclusive growth for the communities.

"Our drive goes beyond profits," Amar stresses. "Through our TM Future Skills (TMFS) School programme, TM has created three 'nucleus' schools designed as regional hubs for innovation via the TMFS Digital Hub. We equipped them with 3D printers, smart TV, and TMFS training on programming, coding, robotics and analytics, to foster young, tech-savvy leaders."

These institutions not only benefit their students but also serve neighbouring schools. With approximately 8,000 students and teachers benefiting, the company plans to onboard another 25 schools soon.

"We are investing in Malaysia's future leaders. Our goal is not merely technology adoption; it is shaping young minds, encouraging career growth, and preparing our youth for the demands of the digital economy," Amar shares passionately.

TM's education arm, Multimedia University (MMU) also collaborates with schools nationwide to provide early exposure to STEM subjects. Faculty members and experts from departments visit schools, offering workshops and career guidance, planting seeds of innovation from an early age. Additionally, in keeping abreast with the latest technology evolution and market demand, MMU has also launched the new Faculty of Artificial Intelligence and Engineering.

Meanwhile, in support of the Government's call for industry players to play a crucial role in improving the employability rate, YTM has launched "Yayasan TM TVET Madani" initiative, aimed at enhancing the skill sets and employability of TVET graduates. With RM1.2 million invested so far, 402 students and 96 lecturers have been trained across four TVET institutions. TM is also committed to facilitating job placements for up to 400 TVET graduates annually.

Going off the beaten track

TM's social stewardship extends even to Malaysia's islands and remote areas. Submarine cables have brought connectivity to places like Pulau Tioman, but Amar admits adoption remains a challenge. To address this, the company goes beyond infrastructure building to community building. "We are stepping in to encourage greater digital literacy and utilisation, aiming to uplift the local economy and offer broader educational opportunities to local communities," Amar elaborates.

For example, in Pulau Tioman, TM is expanding digitalisation efforts to empower youth, starting with Kampung Mukut and schools. Beyond mere internet access, the goal is to establish ecosystems that enable the residents to envision and build futures that go beyond traditional occupations.

"Connectivity alone is not enough," Amar adds. "We want to encourage children there to continue their education, to aspire towards broader horizons, rather than being limited by geography."

Similar programmes are being considered for other islands, which are already connected via TM's submarine cable infrastructure. In these communities, TM envisions creating a virtuous cycle where digital access spurs education, entrepreneurship, and eventually, self-sustaining local economies.

As TM approaches its 80th anniversary, Amar hints at even bolder plans. "Our milestone anniversary next year will not just celebrate history but also unveil groundbreaking initiatives aimed at empowering Malaysians and fostering new innovation," he says.

Reflecting on TM's legacy, Amar points out that nurturing talent and supporting communities has always been part of the company's DNA, even if it has often gone unsung. "Perhaps we have not packaged or publicised these efforts as aggressively as others," Amar admits. "But the reality is, TM has consistently prioritised social impact alongside business performance."

Looking ahead, TM's strategy remains rooted in a dual commitment – building technological infrastructure while simultaneously building human capital.

"Technology alone cannot create change," Amar concludes. "It is the people who use it, adapt to it, and innovate with it who truly drive impact. Our commitment to nurturing talents and strengthening communities is deeply intertwined with our identity."

"This next chapter is not just about TM's future; it is about empowering a brighter, more connected future, ensuring that Malaysia and the region thrive in the digital age."



TM Future Skills (TMFS) School programme via Yayasan TM is aimed at enhancing digital and STEM skills among school students.



TM's commitment to digital inclusivity is reflected in its contribution to the NADI initiative, ensuring that connectivity reaches underserved areas.