Access to fast, reliable Internet critical to economic growth: Cisco

Cisco's Broadband Index revealed that Malaysia workers value access to the Internet more than ever before, as hybrid working continues to be the norm in 2022.

In a statement, the company said its survey also indicates that workers believe that universal access to fast and reliable Internet is critical to economic and societal growth.

The company said its latest global report received almost 60,000 responses across 30 markets, including Malaysia, about their home broadband access, quality and usage.

According to the report, the success of hybrid work hinges on the quality and availability of the Internet, with 80% of Malaysia respondents saying everyone should be able to securely connect to fast and reliable Internet, regardless of location.

The report also highlighted that workers also demand not only speed, but also a high level of reliability and quality, adding that a similar proportion (81%) say the reliability and quality of broadband connections is important to them.

Dependence on high-performance Internet access is underlined by the fact that over eight out of 10 (84%) Malaysia workers actively use their broadband at home for four hours or more each day. Meanwhile, three or more people use the Internet at the same time in 70% of Malaysian households, the report said.

The survey also highlights that many teleworkers need more than a basic level of connectivity to support their livelihoods.

To address the demands on their broadband connection, over one out of two (52%) of Malaysia workers surveyed are planning to upgrade their Internet service in the next 12 months, the report stated.

Access to fast, reliable Internet critical to economic growth: CiscoHana Raja (pic, managing director, Cisco Malaysia said with hybrid working continuing to be the mainstay for Malaysia's workforce, access to high-performance, secure, and reliable Internet is critical for employees to work effectively and productively when they are away from the office.

"At Cisco, we work closely with our service provider customers to provide best-in-class Internet infrastructure and services across Malaysia, enabling the success of a future-proof hybrid workforce, where employees can collaborate seamlessly and securely, no matter where they are," she said.

With 54% of Malaysia's workforce now relying on their home Internet to work from home or run their own business, access to secure, reliable Internet is more important than ever to ensure the smooth running of operations, the survey noted.

This is especially critical for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that do not have the same resources and IT infrastructure of larger enterprises, it added.

At the same time, a new digital business environment has emerged where ambitious entrepreneurs, startups and SMEs can prosper, fostering innovation across industries.

According to the latest data in Malaysia Statistical Business Register (MSBR) published by the **Department of Statistics, Malaysia**, micro, small & medium enterprises (MSMEs) account for 97.4% of overall establishments in Malaysia.

To that end, broadband connectivity will play a key role in the growth and evolution of this core business category, the survey indicated.

But to work from anywhere, employees need to connect to their company's networks and applications from outside the office, accessing private data across multiple locations, through multiple devices, via public and private networks, Cisco said.

It said workers are becoming increasingly aware that safety and security, as well as speed and reliability, will be vital to the success of hybrid working, the report said.

It added that 56% of Malaysia workers who work remotely full time or in a hybrid work arrangement would pay more for a safe broadband connection, revealing that security is top of mind for many respondents.

Beyond the business world, improving the quality of access to the Internet has a far broader impact on the economy and society.

The report highlights that 81% of respondents in Malaysia believe that having access to fast and reliable Internet is critical to future economic growth, and 80% believe it is critical to developing and maintaining a well-educated population.

A similar number of Malaysia respondents (80%) say everyone should be able to securely connect to fast and reliable Internet, regardless of location, it said.

"As of today, more than 40% of the world still remains unconnected. The inability to connect those roughly 3.4 billion people over the next 10 years risks widening the digital divide even more," said Guy Diedrich, senior vice president and global innovation officer, Cisco.

Data from the Cisco Broadband Index survey underscores concerns regarding the digital divide with 67% of Malaysia respondents saying access to affordable and reliable broadband will become a major issue for people, as connectivity becomes even more vital for access to job and educational opportunities.

It also highlighted that three out of five (60%) of Malaysia's workforce say they were unable to access critical services such as online medical appointments, online education, social care and utility services during lockdown, due to an unreliable broadband connection.

The survey also indicated that 81% of respondents would like to see governments accelerate plans to ensure high-speed and reliable Internet is available to everyone.

It also noted that governments can establish broadband policies and programs that encourage competition, drive Internet investments, and expand its reach.

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