

# Boost needed in line with working online

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By JO TIMBUONG



PETALING JAYA: As more Malaysians are opting to work from home (WFH), both employees and companies would like to see some incentives in Budget 2021 that could help them set up a more conducive workspace at home.

Malaysian Employers Federation executive director Datuk Shamsuddin Bardan (*pic*) said while it was important to have the proper equipment to efficiently WFH, a comfortable setting is just as crucial.

“Currently, many employees work from the dining room or living room which can have an effect on productivity.

“But setting up a proper work station with proper ergonomic furniture can cost quite a bit,” he said.

While many global companies have adopted and encouraged WFH, Shamsudin said it was still part of the new norm in Malaysia.

He hopes there would be tax relief in Budget 2021 that would enable employees to gain access to more suitable equipment and technology that would make the WFH experience better.

Shamsuddin said the government should also set aside a good allocation to improve Internet access and quality.

“Not everyone has good Internet access at home and some places still rely on copper wire connection,” he said.

He said the government could also offer companies double tax relief when they help their employees subsidise their home Internet bills. However, the Internet bill subsidies should not be regarded as part of the employee’s income.

The National Tech Association of Malaysia (Pikom) said it would take some time for Malaysian companies and employees to get used to WFH, and having the right tools in place could help accelerate the acceptance.

“It is a mindset matter as some sectors still find it difficult to measure and monitor productivity.

“However, things are changing slowly for the better and we need to have the right infrastructure and better broadband Internet access in place to move forward,” a Pikom spokesman said.

In its Budget wishlist for 2021, Pikom hopes the government might consider double tax relief on reskilling programmes as well as waiving the sales and services tax on IT tools.

The association proposed a double tax deduction for companies and doubling the relief amount on personal income tax for certified upskilling and reskilling programmes.

The association believes that this would allow workers to enhance their skills in a proper setting, something they might have missed after months working virtually and remotely.

Pikom also proposed that allocations to fast-track a digitalisation programme for companies to embark on adopting the new normal be included in Budget 2021.

The programme would be aimed at advising and guiding companies, particularly those highly affected by the pandemic, to break from their conventional working practices and enable them to deal with unprecedented situations like the Covid-19 pandemic.

The association also hopes that Internet access and quality in the country be improved to enable a better experience for remote working and learning.

It added that the government was in consultation with the industry in improving the connectivity to drive the country’s digital economy.