Southeast Asians more likely to buy from firms signed up to SDGs — PwC

BY DANIAL IDRAKI

KUALA LUMPUR: A recent survey conducted by Pricewaterhouse-Coopers (PwC) found that eight out of 10 citizens in the Southeast Asia region are more likely to buy the goods and services of a company that has signed up to the United Nations (UN)-driven Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The SDGs comprise 17 goals and 169 targets on some of the world's biggest issues, including gender inequality, poverty, the use of natural resources, as well as the ability to shape the impact on these issues.

Launched by the UN recently, the SDGs "present a road map for good business growth for the next 15 years", noted PwC in its statement yesterday.

Almost nine out of 10 believe it's important for businesses to sign up to the SDGs; businesses in the region seem to concur as about 97% have plans to address the SDGs in the next five years.

But only 45% of businesses in Southeast Asia surveyed so far actually plan to assess their impact on the SDGs.

"There is good awareness of the importance of the SDGs across Southeast Asia. With 10 UN member states in Southeast Asia, there is a strong expectation for businesses to contribute towards the goals," said PwC's Southeast Asian consulting services' sustainability leader Andrew Chan.

"Although the prospects appear optimistic, measuring their impact on these goals and having a continuous implementation strategy is imperative for long-term achievement of the SDGs. With only 45% of businesses planning to assess their impacts on the goals, there is an opportunity to steer a firmer course towards sustainable growth," he added.

In its survey report titled "SDGs paving the way towards market leadership October 2015", PwC wrote that businesses should adopt the SDGs and integrate them in their strategy and consider the impact on their customers' needs.

"Businesses that have adapted to changing market needs in the past have been rewarded, and now the business landscape in Southeast Asia is changing once again, this time towards greater sustainability," the consulting firm wrote.

PwC said the survey results suggested that "citizens are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of balancing business profit with environmental impact and fair social contribution".

"Businesses have the ability to influence sustainable development by adopting the SDGs, and citizens are becoming increasingly aware of this," it wrote.

Some 73 businesses and 230 citizens in the region took part in the survey to gauge their perception of the SDGs.

Malaysia makes up 50% of business respondents in the survey, followed by Thailand (25%), Singapore (13%), the Philippines (7%), Indonesia (3%) and Vietnam (2%).

Distribution of business responses by industries included, but were not limited to, professional services (10%), communications (8%), banking and capital markets (7%), and energy (7%).