

Ramping up investments to boost digital economy

THE PHILIPPINES needs to tighten its cybersecurity laws and increase investments in infrastructure to strengthen the digital sector's contribution to the economy, analysts said.

"Factors for the slower growth pace [of the digital economy] include the lack of access to affordable or reliable internet, low digital literacy, and cybersecurity concerns," Security Bank Corp. Chief Economist Robert Dan J. Roces said in a Viber message.

"Low-hanging fruits include increasing investments in digital infrastructure, promoting digital literacy, encouraging tech adoption by more businesses, and establishing a favorable regulatory environment that can boost the digital economy's GDP (gross domestic product) share," Mr. Roces added.

The digital economy accounted for 8.4% to Philippine GDP last year, a tad lower than its 8.6% contribution in 2022, government data released last week showed.

The digital economy runs under transactions through digital-enabling infrastructure, e-commerce, digital media or content, and government digital services, the Philippine Statistics Authority said.

Cybersecurity remains a key issue in the digital economy's growth, John Paolo R. Rivera, president and chief economist of Oikonomia Advisory & Research, Inc., said in a Viber message, adding that laws like the SIM Registration Act and the Data Privacy Act have failed to protect consumers against scams.

"[The] slowdown in the digital economy may also stem from the lack of confidence of consumers for its facility as it has been used as a platform for scrupulous and fraudulent activities. This has resulted in slower demand," he said. The government must "penalize to the full extent of law those who will use the digital economy for fraud, regulate the digital economy through more stringent consumer protection," Mr. Rivera added.

The Philippines saw the highest number of detected and blocked financial phishing attempts last year in Southeast Asia, global cybersecurity firm Kaspersky earlier said in a report.

A weaker peso increased importation costs and slowed down investments and growth in the digital economy last year, Rizal Commercial Banking Corp. Chief Economist Michael L. Ricafort said.

Elevated inflation and interest rates also affected the sector, he added.

Despite this, the digital economy is expected "to grow with the new normal with more online or digital transactions even for the coming years... given the greater convenience, with more choices for consumers at lower prices and bigger market locally and internationally for sellers," Mr. Ricafort said.

The Philippines' digital economy is projected to be valued at \$150 billion by 2030, according to a report by Google, Temasek Holdings, and Bain & Company. — **B.M.D. Cruz**

PHL cyberattacks averaged 5B daily in 1st quarter, report shows

By Aubrey Rose A. Inosante

THE PHILIPPINES was hit by an average of five billion cyberattacks per day in the first quarter, with 87% of those targeting the gambling and gaming industry, according to cloud services and cybersecurity provider Cloudflare, Inc.

This marked a 28% increase from 3.9 billion cyberattacks in the fourth quarter of 2023, Cloudflare said in its Quarterly Global Internet Trends & Insights Report released on April 17.

The most targeted sector was the gaming and gambling industry with an 87% share, followed by telecommunications at 6%, hospitality at 5%, and media with 1%, it said.

"There have been more high-volume cyberattacks, e.g. denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks, targeting the Philippines' Internet properties protected by Cloudflare in the

last quarter than in the previous one," Cloudflare said in an e-mailed statement on April 26.

A DDoS attack aims to disrupt Internet services such as websites or mobile applications and make them unavailable for users.

Gambling and gaming were also the top targeted industries in Asia, seeing 53% of total threats, Cloudflare said.

Thailand and Indonesia saw two billion cyberattacks per day with the same top-targeted industry, while Singapore was hit by six billion attacks daily, with its most attacked industry being cryptocurrency, the report showed.

"We observed around two trillion Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP) requests blocked as potential threats (not only DDoS) in the previous quarter in Asia related to the gaming/gambling industry," it said.

This was also the case globally, as over seven of every 100 DDoS

requests mitigated attacked the gaming and gambling industry, followed by the information technology and Internet sector and marketing and advertising, it added.

The online gaming industry is competing for customers in cyberspace, with some even acquiring the services of DDoS attackers to gain market share, according to Allan S. Cabanlong, regional director for Southeast Asia at the Global Forum on Cyber Expertise.

These attacks can cause downtime in gaming sites, leading to a loss in revenue and a decline in player retention, he said.

Extortion is also one of the main objectives of those targeting the gambling industry, said e-commerce advocate Janette Toral.

"Gambling platforms use e-commerce transactions and payments connectivity elements," Ms. Toral said.

Cloudflare said it served an average of 44 billion daily content

requests to the Philippines, with three billion or 6% classified as DDoS attacks originating locally.

Globally, it mitigated 10.5 trillion HTTP DDoS attack requests in the first quarter and blocked 59 petabytes of DDoS attack traffic on the network layer, it said.

The source countries were the United States (19.8%), China (7.73%), Germany (6.5%), Indonesia (6.07%), and Brazil (5.96%).

The quarterly DDoS threat report provides a comprehensive overview of DDoS attack insights and trends over three months. Cloudflare sends an automated survey to victims of a DDoS attack or a ransom note.

Digital Pinoy National Campaigner Ronald B. Gustilo said there must be stiffer fines and penalties for government agencies and private institutions that will be affected by data breaches, depending on the severity of these incidents.

HONOR to launch Magic6 Pro phone in PHL next week

HONOR Philippines is set to launch next week the HONOR Magic6 Pro smartphone, which has a camera powered by artificial intelligence (AI) technologies, it said on Tuesday.

"We're absolutely thrilled to unveil the HONOR Magic6 Pro, especially at a time when the demand for AI-driven solutions is soaring. This smartphone isn't just about keeping up; it's about setting the bar higher. With its award-winning features, it's tailor-made for Filipinos who crave the latest in technology," Stephen Cheng, Vice-President of HONOR Philippines, said in a statement.

The new 5G-enabled smartphone will be launched in the Philippines on May 8, the company said.

The HONOR Magic6 Pro features the HONOR Falcon Camera system at its rear, it said. It has a 50-megapixel (MP) wide camera, a 50-MP ultrawide lens, and a 180-MP periscope telephoto camera. It also has a 50-MP front camera.

"[This] device harnesses the power of AI to deliver unparalleled imaging experiences. With the ability to support up to 100x digital

zoom, coupled with automatic detection of facial expressions and body movements, users can seize every moment with remarkable precision and clarity," HONOR said.

Based on the brand's website, the HONOR Magic6 Pro has a 6.8-inch quad-curved floating screen with an FHD+ 1280x2800 resolution, HDR peak brightness of 5,000 nits and global peak brightness of 6,000 nits.

It runs on Snapdragon 8 Gen 3 and MagicOS 8.0 based on Android 14. — **BVR**

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