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Brunei can be 'regional IT hub'



(Above) Antochan Thomas, director of ProXS Infocomm Limited from India. (Top) Brunei Economic Development Board's new green building to house Brunei's first ICT incubation project. Pictures: BT file

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BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN

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BRUNEI has the potential to be a hub of Information Technology (IT) in Asean countries and the Bimp-Eaga region, said the director of ProXS Infocomm Limited, an Indian IT company.

Antochan Thomas who was in the country for the third time yesterday, said that he believes that Brunei has a chance in terms of IT business because other Asean countries like Singapore and Malaysia already has a market that is too saturated.

"One other reason, is that Brunei's language proficiency is very high, especially in English, it's much better than other countries in the region," Thomas told The Brunei Times.

When asked what countries can Brunei target as an IT hub, he said the emerging markets would be ideal

like Indonesia and Cambodia along with parts of Bimp-Eaga.

Besides that, Thomas believed that the support from Brunei's Ministry of Communication and the Brunei Economic Development Board (BEDB) is encouraging.

"One of the most important thing is that Brunei has a pro-active approach from the government side in terms of what kind of initiative they take and what interests they show. When you ask why do we think of Brunei, it's because of all these initiatives and not to mention, the market is growing," he said.

Thomas has been visiting Brunei frequently to set-up a company which will deliver the same services as ProXS Infocomm Limited.

"When we talk about our company, we are one of the largest IT companies in India. We are leaders in digital signage solutions, RFID (Radio-frequency identification), specialised audio systems and other IT systems. Our business in Brunei will be the same as that of India," he said, adding that they are trying to develop their businesses in other countries and have already started in South Africa.

Thomas said they are hoping to slowly build up their presence in emerging markets and are planning to start in Brunei this June.

"We are looking for potential partners in Brunei and have already identified a couple of potential partners but are still exploring different opportunities. We should be able to launch this new venture in June in Brunei as it has been discussed almost for three months and we will decide on our local partner by the end of the month," he said.

During his visit, Thomas mentioned that he had met with the Minister of Communication, Deputy Ministry of Industry and Primary Resources and the BEDB's Acting Chairman.

"I am impressed with the support extended to us from the government and the Embassy of India with their High Commissioner has offered tremendous support," he said. "They are all supporting and encouraging. With that, we don't want to do different things, but we want to do things differently."

Thomas stressed that their primary intention is to long for a long-term relationship with Brunei and Bruneian companies.

"We are not coming to sell something here and go off. We are planning to establish in Brunei, a local company to discuss with and work with different Bruneian companies. Basically, we're talking about technology transfer, creating local employment in Brunei and using local human resources," said Thomas, adding that they hope to join hands with more Bruneian companies for other projects.

He envisions the company to be a local Bruneian company where they will be ready to train Bruneian youth in different specialised areas and develop them through this technology transfer. Thomas also hopes that the business will break even within one year, a target which he admits is "quite fast".

"By starting in Brunei and training the locals here, we hope to branch out of Brunei to the region," added Thomas.

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