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Mimit hunts for GoHalal partners in Silicon Valley



Mimit E-Technology's Hj Rushdi El-Hakim heads to Silicon Valley. Picture: BT file

Melvin Jong
BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN

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EXECUTIVES from Mimit E-Technology will be leaving for Silicon Valley in San Francisco this weekend to pitch their online halal food verification system to potential investors.

Rushdi El-Hakim Dato Seri Setia Hj Ibrahim, Mimit managing director, said that the GoHalal system, winner of last year's ThinkBig business plan competition, is now ready for launch and he hopes to recruit more partners in other parts of the world. The business plan competition was organised by the Brunei Economic Development Board through its iCentre.

"We want to have partners from Europe and the States, among others, before launching. We have been travelling a lot to Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia to promote this system and have gotten good response," he said on the sidelines of the launching ceremony of iCentre's ThinkBig Business Plan Competition for 2010/11 held earlier this week at iCentre, Anggerek Desa.

"The more partners we have the more confident people will be. You see, the challenge for us is to tap into the American market because they are huge producers of food, beverages and pharmaceuticals," he added.

The managing director told The Brunei Times that they will be flying off tomorrow, May 8, and will be pitching to two separate venture capitalists on May 11.

"I have to pitch to these venture capitalists, not in financial terms but more into marketing our products," he said before detailing a case study for his pitch.

GoHalal does not give certification but helps facilitate and speed up the halal accreditation process by relevant government bodies

The GoHalal developers expect the system to be marketed and put to use in at least 20 countries within the first 24 months of its launching, scheduled before June this year.

Hj Rushdi said that obtaining halal accreditation for food in Brunei is a very strict procedure involving 13 different departments, a process that can take up to three months.

"If I have a product from China and I want to introduce it to the Brunei market, then I would have to certify that it is halal and this would mean having to go through these 13 departments, which will take time.

"This means that I will lose a lot of profit just to enter the Brunei market," Hj Rushdi said.

"What we see from the government bodies right now is that they have to look through reference books to determine if each ingredient used is halal or not.

"By using the system (which houses a database of some 32,000 different ingredients), all you have to do is type in the ingredients and you will know what is halal or haram (or unacceptable in Islamic law) in just a few minutes," he added.

Hj Rushdi expects the system to enable halal verification of a product in just one day. He added that the server and database of the system would continually be updated in accordance with the guidelines from both Brunei and Singapore's Islamic Religious Councils, among others.

The Coca Cola fan said that he had drank the fizzy beverage from different countries such as Australia and the United States and have found that the quality of Coca Cola in such areas taste "much better" than the Asia products.

"I am not saying or complaining that Brunei's doesn't taste good. It is just that the quality is not there," he said.

"So I will be doing a verification test with the Coca Cola ingredients found in Wikipedia. I am not sure if these are the real ingredients but if they are and if they can be verified as Halal, then it can be brought to Brunei and I am sure people will like this Coca Cola much more than the current Brunei version," he added.

"This is my selling point. If I can bring (verify) a product from the States or Europe as Halal then you have an industry in Asia, Middle East, all over the world," said the ThinkBig winner.

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