

Published by: The Brunei Times, 29<sup>th</sup> December 2009

URL:

<http://www.bt.com.bn/en/business-national/2009/12/29/icentre-firms-see-rosy-prospects-2010>

## iCentre firms see rosy prospects in 2010



The iCentre building in Angerek Desa, Berakas. Picture: BT file  
Goh De No  
and Izam Said Ya'akub  
BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN  
Tuesday, December 29, 2009

TECHNOLOGY firms under iCentre's wings are projecting better prospects next year as they build on momentum created this year after rolling out products, some of which have caught the eye of foreign investors.

In an interview with The Brunei Times, the iCentre incubators shared plans for next year, promising bigger, better and more exciting things to come.

Hj Rushdi El-Hakim Dato Seri Setia Hj Ibrahim, founder and managing director of Mimit e-Technology, said 2009 was a great year for the firm after winning the special merit award for the Think Big Business plan competition.

"Besides that we also launched our made-in-Brunei software known as 'V-Trak' and that has already led to a pilot project with the Royal Brunei Police Force," he said, adding that the highlight of the year would be winning the Brunei Economic Development Board's tender for the Buy Brunei Portal.

Next year, Mimit e-Technology will be busy promoting its business-to-business website and other new applications it has been working on with other incubatees from the National University of Singapore.

"We are also working with other multinational corporations from Malaysia who are interested to collaborate with us to develop new innovative software and hardware," Hj Rushdi said.

He said the challenge next year would be to try to convince Bruneians to use Mimit's applications and "maybe trying ... (for) big tenders would be a problem due to the mindset of local abilities".

Hj Rushdi said the other challenge would be dealing with the "Nasi Katok" mindset of other firms trying to copy a software or solution the company has developed.

"Having competition is healthy, but having too many would make it hard to survive because of the price

war," he said

For Rafiqun WDSI, 2009 was the firm's breakout year which saw the firm stride into the international IT market.

"Basically the biggest achievement that we had was getting funding from a UK-based company," said Haswandi Hj Sahari, Rafiqun WDSI's operations manager.

"Indirectly we are doing a foreign direct investment into Brunei. We attracted them to invest in us to come out with a product we have developed in the last eight to 10 months," he said, referring to the firm's IP-based wireless mesh solution, Brumesh.

Brumesh is essentially a combination of hardware (a router) and software that allows users to extend the coverage of private and public Wi-Fi hotspots and bring them into home or the workplace.

Haswandi said the firm is also looking to penetrate the international market, noting Brumesh is already being used in Penang, where people can surf the Internet while on the move.

Rafiqun WDSI also succeeded in attracting the interest of Philippine company Crester Communications, which offered to market the Brunei product in the Philippines.

"To penetrate the market is quite tough to be honest, but Alhamdulillah we are able to compete with brands such as Cisco and Linksys that have been there for one or two decades," said Haswandi.

For next year, he said the firm will build on the momentum achieved this year. He said one of the focus will be on local installations and providing nationwide wireless Internet coverage.

"We've been talking to service providers (in Brunei) and we want to penetrate Asean countries as well, where we have been talking to several parties as well," he said, citing Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand.

As for Expansys Technologies, a content provider for telcos, the firm is projecting 2010 to be the year that all its hard work is realised.

"We will be rolling out the SMS service, Mext-G, that we signed with Telbru, next year," said Keeran Janin, Expansys Technologies managing director.

He said the SMS service will be linked to government agencies where the mobile application will allow users to have a similar platform to that of a call centre, except through SMS.

Some of the challenges that the company feels it would have involved integrating all the government agencies together.

"We have learnt a lot this year, so next year is when we push it all out and focus on educating the public on Mext-G," said Janin. Mext-G, a mobile-centric service that aims to bring day-to-day services and information to anyone that owns a cellphone, will capitalise on Brunei's high mobile phone penetration rate (one of the highest in Asia) and the ongoing e-government drive, he said.

Rano Iskandar, founder of one of Brunei's most read blogs, Ranoadidas.com, said the highlight of 2009 was a website revamp to mark the site's sixth year anniversary.

"This year has been a successful one as my viewership has steadily increased to an average of 21,000 a

month now," said Rano, who expects the trend to increase in 2010.

"Do expect more coverage on social events and there will be other things in line for Ranoadidas.com by the end of Q1, 2010," he told The Brunei Times in an email.

Rano added that BruKiosk Communication, which manages Ranoadidas.com, is also hoping to make food website, Lovefoodhatewaste.org, more consistent in terms of updates and not just rely solely on the Ramadhan period to draw readers.

The incubatees have all credited iCentre to playing a role in their success since they began operations.

The centre focuses on providing consultancy in the set up of high-tech business incubators. The Brunei Times