

# Firms to get leg up in cloud computing

By **ONG BOON KIAT**

FIRMS will soon be able to get technical help, training and access to free software to help them adopt cloud computing – a budding technology seen as one of Singapore's future economic pillars.

The Infocomm Development Authority (IDA) of Singapore and Canadian software firm Platform Computing announced yesterday that they will be setting up a Cloud Innovation Centre (CIC) in May.

To be housed in Platform Computing's Fusionopolis premises, it will provide Singapore-based firms access to technical consultants, training programmes and free cloud computing software.

The announcement was made at the GridAsia 2009 conference and exhibition.

According to a Platform Computing official, the initial investment of the CIC is "around several hundred thousand dollars over three years".

The centre, which will be run by four staff, aims to train over 600 professionals from enterprises, government organisations, software vendors and start-ups in Singapore over the next three years.

Cloud computing, which is closely related to grid computing, refers to the delivery of software and IT services over the Web and other networks. Google's popular Gmail service is often mentioned as an example of this model.

A major appeal of cloud computing is its on-demand and pay-as-you-use model, which lets firms save money.

Speaking at GridAsia, Leong Keng Thia, deputy chief executive and director-general (telecoms and post) of IDA, said the CIC will help foster "private clouds", which are different from public ones from vendors such as Amazon, Microsoft, Salesforce.com and others.

"Private clouds will be critical in these early days, to promote adoption among businesses who may hold back due to considerations and concerns about putting their operations up in the public clouds," he said.

"Private clouds will allow businesses to conduct its operations in a more secure manner. The CIC will assist independent software vendors and start-ups to acquire the know-how and technology to develop services for private clouds."

IDA has been actively promoting grid and cloud computing in Singapore. It launched the eye-catching National Grid Initiative last November; a part of the government's vision to create, by 2013, a grid computing marketplace called the Grid Market Hub.

Last July, IDA joined hands with global tech giants Yahoo, Hewlett-Packard and Intel to launch a global cloud computing test-bed.