

Govt boost for cloud services

IDA to offer 50% support for selected private sector cloud-based projects for computing or storage needs, writes **RAJU CHELLAM**

COMPANIES based in Singapore, who have a project that would need huge and varying amounts of storage or computing power can get government support to use cloud services. This offer comes from the IDA (Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore) and is open for private companies, educational institutions, research bodies and even government agencies.

IDA said that it would like to support projects that will boost infocomm infrastructure development for iN2015 vertical clusters.

"We would also support specific light-house projects that illustrate and promote the use of cloud computing," IDA's CEO RAdm (NS) Ronnie Tay said during the ongoing CloudAsia 2010. "We hope to establish Singapore as a Shared Services Hub where local users, especially SMBs (small and medium-sized businesses), can exploit SaaS (Software-as-a-Service), thereby encouraging further infocomm capability development."

The support will not be in cash, but in computing and storage resources from the National Grid service providers.

Government agencies that are selected will have their computing and storage resources fully subsidised; other organisations would need to pay just 50 per cent for their cloud computing needs. IDA will hold a public briefing on this cloud computing offer next Friday.

"We see cloud computing as the next important paradigm that will sharpen the competitiveness of Singapore," RAdm Tay said.

"We seek to develop a vibrant cloud computing ecosystem and position Singapore as a centre for cloud computing services in Asia and globally. This is characterised by huge scalability, with businesses meeting their infocomm needs by procuring them as services through a pay-as-you-use utility model."

CloudAsia saw some 600 delegates over a week-long series of events that included keynotes by Alan Ganek, CTO and VP of Strategy & Technology for IBM's Software Group; Chris Whitney, head of HP Labs Singapore; Simone Brunozzi, technology evangelist at Amazon Web Services; John Galligan, Microsoft Asia's Internet Policy head; and Ismael Ghalimi, founder of Intalio, a cloud platform firm.

"The cloud's paradigm shift introduces immense business opportunities to Singapore," RAdm Tay said. "Local ICT companies can leverage on Singapore's strong infrastructure and trust environment. These companies could extend their reach globally by tapping on the cloud presence in Singapore. The larger Singapore economy would also benefit if businesses are able to adopt cloud computing to reduce cost and increase productivity."

The event attracted a fair number of SMBs which were exploring using cloud services to cut IT costs. According to Access Markets International (AMI) Partners, SMBs using some form of cloud services will jump from under 2 per cent in end-2009 to more than 15 per cent by end-2010 and up to 85 per cent by end-2014 in Singapore.

One boost should come from the



Computing needs: Support will be from the National Grid service providers

next-generation NBN (National Broadband Network). By 2012, about 95 per cent of all buildings will be wired up and will offer ultra-high access speeds of up to one Gbps.

"The NBN will provide the framework on which ISVs (independent software vendors) can create cloud applications," said IDA's assistant chief executive of infrastructure and services development Khoong Hock Yun.

"Cloud computing can provide a link across the entire infocomm ecosystem, from high value R&D spin-offs to impactful adoption by user industries."

According to IT research agency Gartner, storage-as-a-service, one of the services offered by cloud computing, could be up to 10 times cheaper than the current "on-premise" mode, bandwidth connectivity costs could drop 50 per cent and processing costs could drop 33 per cent. It is not just companies, but even cities and governments that could see benefits from running applications on the cloud.

"IBM has been working with clients to adopt cloud computing in new and innovative ways," IBM's Mr Ganek said. "Some key clients include PayPal, cities of Wuxi and Dongying in China, Panasonic, SK Telecom, and Quang Trung Software City in Vietnam."

One key issue is the gap between R&D (research and development) and real-world industry usage. This needs to be bridged so that the results of the research can find its way into industry applications. The ideal way to bridge this would be to create a platform to link research to the needs of industry and government.

"Such a platform can identify opportunities in anticipatory demand for Next Generation ICT technologies and build strategic relationships with major research labs," according to IDA. This platform will be able to harness research results, help to create prototypes of promising projects that could be commercialised by interested companies, and shorten the time to market.

In April last year, a CIC (Cloud Innovation Centre) was set up by Platform Computing for companies that sought to deploy private clouds (within the enterprise's own data centres). The aim was to help lower cost barriers and conduct trial runs on private clouds. So far, a few government agencies, educational institutes and private sector companies have run pilots on the CIC before deploying them as enterprise clouds.