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Singapore's plans are on the Cloud

Government initiatives on Cloud Computing to benefit SMBs in S'pore and the Asia region

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by *Raju Chellam*

When the rest of the world gets down to the ground to work their way up, the Government of Singapore goes the other way to work its way down. And nothing is more fascinating above the ground than Cloud Computing, or the virtual sharing of resources on demand, anytime, anywhere, at a reasonable price.

In July, Hewlett Packard, Intel Corp and Yahoo! Inc said they will create a global, multi-data center, open source test bed to boost cloud computing research and education. The goal: to promote open collaboration among industry, academia and governments by removing the financial and logistical barriers to research in data-intensive, Internet-scale computing.

HP, Intel and Yahoo! tied up with the Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore (IDA), the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT) in Germany to form the research initiative. The partnership with Illinois also includes the US National Science Foundation.

IDA will offer users the computing resources required to develop cloud computing software and apps. IDA will also leverage the test bed and its industry partnerships to train local students and professionals on the technologies and programs associated with cloud computing.

"With the ready and available Internet-scale resources in Singapore to support cloud computer R&D work, we can collaborate with like-minded partners to advance the field," says Khoong Hock Yun, assistant chief executive of the Infrastructure Development Group at IDA. "Cloud computing is considered by many to be the next paradigm shift in computer technology, and this may be the next 'platform' for innovative ecosystems. Partnerships like this will allow Singapore to leverage this new paradigm for greater economic and social growth."

How would this benefit SMBs? As our lead story says, small and medium businesses (SMBs, or companies with up to 999 employees) in Singapore will invest up to US\$1.5 billion on Internet access and telecom services this year, up 3% over 2007. Spending on cellphones and long-distance telephony services will make up about 50% of the total.

SMBs in Singapore will boost their spending on Internet access and telecom services over the next few years. That's because of the growing number of mobile and telecommuting employees, the increasingly high penetration of notebooks among SMBs, the Singapore Government's initiative to grow the wireless broadband market, and the growing popularity of Internet-enabled handheld devices.

And more SMBs will think of using resources from the "cloud" to save costs, boost productivity and have the latest software and applications on demand.

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