

05/11/1999

Net-Linx to invest RM100m for Asian HQ in Cyberjaya

Lokman Mansor

GERMAN-based software developer Net-Linx Asia Pacific Sdn Bhd will invest RM100 million in the next four or five years to establish in Cyberjaya its regional headquarters for Asia.

The investment includes construction of an office complex to be completed by July 2001, Net-Linx president Holm Hallbauer said.

"We looked at several countries, including Hong Kong, Singapore, Indonesia and Thailand, and decided to make Malaysia our regional hub because the business conditions here are unparalleled," he said.

Hallbauer was speaking in Cyberjaya yesterday at the signing of an agreement between his company and Country Heights Holdings Bhd (CHHB) for the purchase of 106 units of Cyber Heights Villas for RM32.26 million.

CHHB was represented by its managing director Tan Sri Lee Kim Yew. The ceremony was witnessed by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad. The villas, costing from RM209,000 to RM355,000 per unit and incorporating SmartHome technology, will house Net-Linx personnel working in the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC).

SmartHome technology allows the homes' lighting, air-conditioning, security and other functions to be controlled via a laptop computer or telephone. The units also have computer plug-in points to the MSC fibre-optic backbone with voice, data and video capabilities.

"This deal reinforces our commitment to the visionary concept of the MSC. Its location of less than 2km from our proposed office complex also fits in nicely with our future plans in the MSC," Hallbauer said.

Net-Linx vice-president Paul Donlan, meanwhile, said the regional headquarters in Malaysia represents the final component of Net-Linx's global strategy. It already has offices in Canada to serve the North American market and another in Germany for the European market.

"We are impressed with Malaysia's strong and stable government and its infrastructure to link us up and take our products globally. Malaysian workers have also shown a capability for research and development. It did not take us long to make a decision," he said.

Donlan said Malaysia's multicultural society also presents an opportunity for Net-Linx to develop software in various languages that can be targeted at other countries in the region.

Hallbauer said to develop local human resources to meet Net-Linx's long-term needs, the company has been in contact with three local universities on possible joint research and development (R and D) efforts.

This strategy has been employed in Net-Linx's other regional hubs as well. University of Alberta's department of computing science chair and Net-Linx adviser Dr R.G. Goebel, who was also present, said he is impressed with the quality of training in Malaysian universities.

"When we started doing research with Net-Linx, we found that there is a very short timeframe between the R and D and application of findings. We are looking to do the same in Malaysia," he said.

In his speech, Hallbauer announced that Net-Linx will be offering three one-year scholarships to Malaysians to receive hands-on training at the University of Alberta.

Net-Linx Asia Pacific is an MSC status company. The parent company in Germany is one of the world's fastest-growing suppliers of integrated software systems for the advertising, telecommunications, information and directory-publishing industries.

Current R and D work pursued by the company includes e-commerce support systems and internationalisation efforts to accommodate Asian languages; remote/portable sales tools and the new Multimedia Advertising Platform system; and operator and voice integrated systems.

Hallbauer said Net-Linx has a US\$100 million (US\$1 = RM3.80) share of the world's US\$50 billion software market, and expects to increase it significantly after the company goes public in Germany in the next six to 18 months.

(END)