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Local firms urge to bid for Dubai airport projects

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MORE than US\$1.5 billion (US\$1 = RM3.80) worth of projects at Dubai International Airport in United Arab Emirates (UAE) are up for grabs by contractors and suppliers through the online procurement service offered by airport community portal, airportXchange.

The project that is to take off is the RM500 million Dubai Mega Cargo Terminal, to be followed by US\$1.4 billion airport expansion project.

XYBASE Sdn Bhd president Suhaimie Abu Hassan said local contractors stand a good chance to be selected for the project as Dubai Government has liberal policy towards foreign investors in the emirate.

"Our contractors have the expertise needed to participate in the airport and cargo terminal projects.

"We are talking about billions of dollar project and our contractors should be able to win the contract," he told a news conference in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Suhaimie said the second phase of the project - the expansion of the Dubai airport - offers great opportunities for those in the construction industry suppliers of airport-related equipment and consultants.

"The expansion plan calls for a new passenger terminal and concourse.

"Construction firms and suppliers should take advantage of the Middle East airportXchange, register their details to enable them to bid for tenders online," he said.

The Middle East airportXchange (www.ax-max.com) is an airport community portal for West Asia.

It is a joint-venture between Dubai's Department of Civil Aviation (which holds 51 per cent stake) and airportXchange (49 per cent stake), which is owned by XYBASE.

XYBASE had earlier signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Dubai's DCA in April during a visit by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to Dubai, one of the seven emirates in the UAE.

"When the portal for West Asia was launched together with the online procurement for Dubai cargo terminal project on July 3, it had received good response from local contractors.

"However, in Malaysia, only a few local contractors have signed up. That is why we are extending the deadline for bidders from today to July 17," Suhaimie said.

On the expansion of airportXchange, Suhaimie said the company has allocated RM30 million to develop the airport community portal at four sites, namely in Malaysia, Dubai, London and the US.

So far, he said the company has spent RM8 million.

Suhaimie said XYBASE expects to break even from its Middle East airportXchange's activities in 2004.

Most of the revenue would come from fees on transactions conducted over the portal but he said the company has yet to finalise a revenue model with Dubai DCA.

Besides the airport community portal located at Dubai Internet City and another one in Kuala Lumpur for Asia Pacific region, XYBASE will also establish a portal in London for European region as well as in the US.

For the European region, the portal will be ready by September this year with 30 airports are expected to sign up as members. The one in the US is expected to be launched in the first quarter next year.

"For the West Asian region, we are now discussing with seven more

airports. Altogether, we are talking to about 70 airports worldwide - including airports in Sydney, Hong Kong, Taipeh and South Korea," he said.

Wholly-owned by EXBASE, airportXchange is the developer and operator of a web-enabled online marketplace exchange known as airportXchange.com.

Its principal activity is to operate a comprehensive e-business platform for the airport community, including airport operators, suppliers, service providers, retailers and travellers.

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