

# BLOCK71 opens new facility for startups in Jakarta

By Jacquelyn Cheok  
jaccheok@sph.com.sg  
@JacCheokBT  
Singapore

BLOCK71, the blue, seven-storey industrial building in one-north widely touted as Singapore's startup hub, on Friday opened a new incubation space in Jakarta.

Observers hailed its setup, but said having Indonesian partners would be integral to giving Singapore startups access to the Indonesian market.

BLOCK71 Jakarta, as it is called, has 1,500 sq m of space in Kuningan, in south Jakarta. It is a partnership between the National University of Singapore (NUS) and the Salim Group, one of Indonesia's largest conglomerates with businesses in food, banking and property.

Lily Chan, chief of NUS Enterprise (the entrepreneurial arm of NUS), said: "BLOCK71 Jakarta will enable entrepreneurs and innovators from Singapore and Indonesia to work together and tap the combined experience and resources of NUS Enterprise and Salim Group."

Companies that are developing "innovative tech solutions with the potential to scale globally" are encouraged to set up shop in BLOCK71, she said. It will cost about S\$80 a month to rent a desk there.

The incubation space is the fourth BLOCK71 facility globally. The first one opened in Singapore in 2011. This was followed by the one in San Francisco in 2015;



From far left: Mr Salim, Mr Lim and Dr Chan at the launch of BLOCK71 Jakarta, a partnership between the National University of Singapore and Indonesia's Salim Group.

the space in Suzhou, a joint venture by NUS Enterprise, NUS (Suzhou) Research Institute and Ascendas-Singbridge Group, could open by the end of this year.

At the launch event for Jakarta's BLOCK71 were Lim Hng Kiang, Singapore's Minister for Trade and Industry (Trade), and Enggartiasto Lukita, Indonesia's Minister of Trade.

Mr Lim said: "This is an example of what we hope to achieve . . . to build a Global Innovation Alliance, which was a recommendation by the Singapore Committee on the Future Economy earlier this year."

He added that the Indonesia-Singapore partnership is timely, given that this year marks the 50th year of diplomatic ties between the two countries.

Besides benefiting from access to the global networks of NUS Enterprise and

Salim Group, startups at BLOCK71 Jakarta will also enjoy incubation support and opportunities to test business ideas in the Indonesian market.

Asked what is in it for Salim Group, Dr Chan said the partnership will enable the Indonesian family corporation to get a first look at innovations coming out from Singapore and to form business collaborations

Axton Salim, executive director of Salim Group, added: "We want to support entrepreneurs as well as encourage new developments in Indonesia. Salim Group's networks and experience will facilitate the entry of startups and innovations to the local market and benefit the community here."

Since preliminary operations began in March, about 80 per cent of the space has been taken up by some 20 startups, half of

which are from Singapore. They include on-line video platform Viddsee, pain relief patch-maker pslove company and mobile virtual network operator CirclesLife.

Asked if incubators and venture capital firms are also welcome at BLOCK71 Jakarta, Dr Chan said: "We are not starting down this path yet. Our focus is on building the community (of tech startups) first." She noted that already, several Singapore-based venture capital firms have a presence in Indonesia, among them Monk's Hill Ventures and East Ventures.

Singapore's BLOCK71 also hosts nearly 30 incubators and venture capital firms.

Christopher Quek, managing partner of venture capital firm Tri5 Ventures, which has as office in Singapore's BLOCK71, said overseas BLOCK71 locations are critical launchpads for Singapore startups to gain quick connections into new ecosystems.

He told *The Business Times*: "There should be more global BLOCK71 locations. Their goal differs from that of IE Singapore, which helps established, traditional small and medium enterprises expand overseas. BLOCK71 is more startup-friendly. I am very glad to see the opening of BLOCK71 Jakarta, as I've had many enquiries of startup entrepreneurs seeking help to expand into Indonesia."

Alex Lin, head of ecosystem development at SGInnovate, said BLOCK 71 Jakarta should be more than just a physical setup; it should bring on board local partners such as incubators or venture capital firms. "These will really help Singapore startups access the Indonesian market."