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Singapore firms eye healthcare infrastructure services in Qatar

By Hoe Yeen Nie, Channel NewsAsia | Posted: 19 March 2009 22:26 hrs

DOHA, Qatar: Demand for healthcare services in the Gulf is expected to more than double over the next 20 years and some Singapore companies are seeing Qatar as a gateway into the region.

The value of the market in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) alone, according to government agency IE Singapore, will be worth US\$11.9 billion in 2015, up from US\$3.2 billion in 2005.

About US\$14 billion worth of related projects are underway across the region – one-fifth of that in Qatar.

Compared to some of its Gulf neighbours, Qatar's development is often said to be more measured, with an eye on long-term sustainability. Its focus on research and education is one example of diversification.

Another is the development of its healthcare infrastructure and this is where Singapore companies are eyeing an opportunity.

Lim Ban Hoe, regional director, Middle East and Africa, IE Singapore, said: "Although they do have hospitals here already, there are new ones coming up. At the same time, the current ones are also looking at ways to improve their efficiency, technology, systems integration etc."

Despite Singapore's small size, companies said it can remain competitive by leveraging on its technological expertise. Mach7, for example, has developed a software that allows medical scans to be shared among researchers and hospitals.

Ravindran Krishnan, chief technology officer, Mach7 Technologies, said: "The fact that we've got our technology in Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston actually speaks volumes.

"Once you're in there, you're like playing with the big boys, so to speak, in the realms of the GEs, the Siemens, the Agfas. That's why they look at us with that level of credentials."

IE Singapore believes Singapore's reputation in the Gulf as a healthcare destination will help open doors when doing business. Frequent high-level visits by Singapore's leaders also underpin the city-state's commitment to the Middle East.

President S R Nathan is the third leader to make a trip to Qatar after visits by Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong last February and Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong in December.

On Wednesday, Mr Nathan visited the newly opened Museum of Islamic Art, which houses works dating from the 7th century. He later met Singaporeans living in the Gulf state.

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Video



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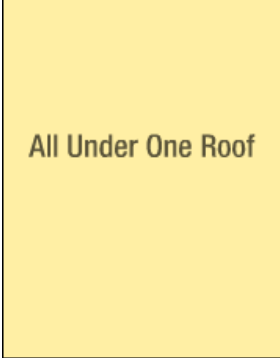
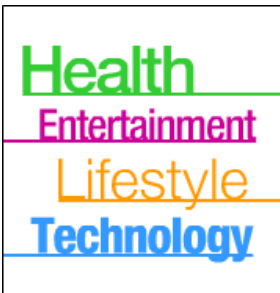
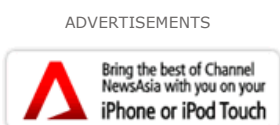
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