

Taiwan to invest in cloud-based computing

The Associated Press

Taiwan's government will invest 24 billion New Taiwan dollars (\$760 million) in cloud-based computing over the next five years, as a complement to Microsoft Corp.'s support for local firms to develop and use the new technology.

Vice Economics Minister Lin Sheng-chung said the Cabinet has approved the investment plan that could streamline public services and generate numerous business opportunities for local companies.

Lin spoke at a conference Microsoft held in Taipei to introduce new technology and services related to cloud computing.

Cloud computing involves running applications in Web browsers instead of installing them on individual hard drives. The information entered in the programs also is stored in data centers run by third parties such as Google.

The cloud allows companies to store and retrieve data over the Internet whenever they need it instead of saving it on their own computers, resulting in sizable savings.

Over the past few months, Microsoft has been working with leading Taiwanese computer makers to develop advanced servers that handle the massive traffic at Microsoft's cloud-based data centers.

John Kalkman, a Microsoft vice president, said the software giant is also working with local software firms to develop applications that will allow consumers to access data over the Internet through their PCs, cell phones, tablets or other mobile devices.

Chunghwa Telecom Co., Taiwan's telecom giant, is building a Microsoft operating system-based cloud data center that leases storage and computer power to clients.

Wu Cheng-wen, an executive of Taiwan's Industrial Technology Research Institute, said Taiwan's booming computer industry has been dominated by a few large firms because computing equipment requires costly investments that small firms cannot afford.

In a few years, he said, Taiwan may see the rise of small firms making use of the less expensive cloud computing to design new applications and offer various services.

"Cloud computer can be the engine to power the next stage of our economic development," Wu said.

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