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Wall Builder Nehemiah To Expand Overseas

Business

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Patent holder of home grown reinforced soil technology, Ir. Dr. Nehemiah Lee will focus on aggressively marketing his intellectual property in the next three years when his company starts spreading its wings, far and wide.

The 55-year-old Chief Executive Officer and Founder of Nehemiah Reinforced Soil Sdn Bhd (NRS) said that since the company is now the market leader in reinforced soil, commanding a 45% market share in the domestic market, it is time that the company focuses its resources on expanding into overseas markets such as Australia, India, Hong Kong, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Kazakhstan and Pakistan.

"Conservatively, we expect 30% of turnover in the next three years to come from our infrastructure projects overseas," he said. "A significant contribution is expected to come from India and Australia."

Speaking at the company's International Technical Conference today (7 Nov) in Petaling Jaya in conjunction with its 15th Anniversary, Dr. Lee said that while China may be an attractive market, he would take a cautious approach by first establishing itself in Hong Kong. "In a technology driven business, it is important that we select our markets and the right partners before we make a big launch," he said.

In emerging markets like Vietnam, he rationalised that the population there is more than three times that of Malaysia and rising disposable income is constantly giving rise to the pressure to upgrade from motorbikes to four-wheel vehicles, making it a necessity to build flyovers and highway interchanges. "We have made several exploratory trips to Vietnam and by Q1 next year we hope to set up a representative office there," he said.

Meanwhile, in Australia, Dr. Lee said the business and engineering community is able to appreciate and pay for a piece of good technology whenever they discover one. "We have incorporated our company in New South Wales, Australia through a joint partnership with our counterpart to explore business opportunities in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands," he added.

NRS is already in the process of obtaining the approval from the Road Transport Authority of New South Wales. "Hopefully, with this being obtained by early next year, we will see some construction projects starting in Australia by Q2 2009," Dr. Lee enthused.

Currently, NRS has joint-ventures or agents appointed in India, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Brunei and Bangladesh, as well as Sabah and Sarawak in East Malaysia. The Mokhali flyover is, in fact, the

first flyover interchange in Bangladesh, which was built using Dr. Lee's Nehemiah Wall, a patent he currently holds in Australia, India, Korea and Malaysia.

The company recently inked an agreement with MMC-Gamuda worth RM57 million of jobs for the double-tracking project from Ipoh to Padang Besar due for completion by 2011.

The company has seen an organic growth of 25% growth in the past five years. While the construction industry is expected to soften in the next two years, NRS is confident that it will be able to weather the storms, while focusing on its overseas market using a Malaysian technology.

"With our cost effective and proven technology using modular hexagonal shaped concrete panels, a highway ramp can be constructed in less than half of the time required to build the same ramp using the conventional reinforced concrete wall or viaduct," he said. "As we expand, we will have the economies of scale, and our bulk purchase of steel and cement will also help reduce our costs without compromising on the integrity of the wall structures."

Currently, NRS' retaining wall for a land bridge in the Cameron Highlands is one of the highest walls (20.5 m) erected in Malaysia, soon to be overtaken by another higher wall in Pos Betau (21.0 m) also in the Cameron Highlands.

Dr. Lee announced that the company has plans to go for public listing in three to five years time. "This will be done when the time is right and the market knows us," he said. "This is because we anticipate that we will need more funds to expand overseas, considering that there is such a big demand in emerging markets around the world for reinforced soil technology in building flyovers, underpasses, and reinforcing hill slopes."

Also at the press conference was NRS' Australian Joint-Venture counterpart, Simon Kavanagh, General Manager of Nehemiah Reinforced Soil Australia as well as representatives from Sri Lanka, Brunei, Sabah and Sarawak.

Nehemiah Reinforced Soil Sdn Bhd is a specialist subcontractor incorporated in Malaysia on 12 May 1993. They are involved in reinforced soil system, known as the Nehemiah Wall or Nehemiah Reinforced Earth®, a home grown reinforced soil technology where Dr. Lee is the patent holder.
(MySinchew)

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