

Jan 26, 2008

Red tape slasher helps to build his business

First Mover helps ease the way for enterprises that use government assets innovatively

By Chua Hian Hou

WHEN Mr Alvin Lee decided he wanted to make sandcastles for a living, he asked the government for help.



The National Parks Board thought his idea of setting up a centre devoted to building sandcastles was worth supporting, and the plan was soon under way.

National Parks employed the Government's little-known First Mover programme and slashed the amount of red-tape Mr Lee needed to deal with on issues like tendering for the public land he wanted.

In short order, Mr Lee was allocated a piece of land at East Coast Park, where his Castle Beach now proudly sits. He is

now well-known for a sandcastle-building kit sold in Singapore and the United States.

The First Mover scheme has helped other entrepreneurs, including a marketing company that uses hawker centre table tops as advertising displays and another that set up an environmental hub on Pulau Ubin.

Its aim is to 'reward businesses with innovative ideas on the use of government assets'.

Entrepreneurs using the programme can gain the use of an asset like government land, or a government building's wall or floor, without having to undergo a tender process.

Before the scheme started three years ago, entrepreneurs risked having their ideas stolen once the asset applied for was put up for public tender.

And under First Mover, a government agency can award an entrepreneur the use of the asset at under the market price.

The Government will raise the programme's profile with a **week-long roadshow at Raffles Place Park on top of the Raffles Place MRT station starting on Monday.**

It has also set up a new, high-powered Pro-Enterprise Panel chaired by civil service head Peter Ho and various business leaders, including The Ascott Group chief executive Jennie Chua, to champion the programme.

First Mover was previously implemented by individual government agencies.

Mr Ho said the programme 'not only gives innovative businesses a head start but also encourages the formation of creative new businesses'.

Ms Chua said being first 'is not easy as one is treading onto untested waters'. This was why the panel wanted to reward those that 'dare to be pioneers', and she hoped that more would 'make full use of this opportunity'.

For more information on the First Mover programme, visit www.firstmover.gov.sg