

Trip report on Bali site visit for APRICOT 2007

By James Seng

This is actually the first time I been to Bali despite it been so closed to Singapore. Everything I know about Bali for this trip is either from friends or from newspaper.

The airport in Bali is a typical small tourist airport but well-managed (I suppose so given the large number of tourists they have). I have little trouble getting through the custom and step out of the airport at noon time, the hosts from APIIJ is already waiting for me.



The car ride from the airport my hotel (Hyatt in Nusa Dua) is only a short 20min ride. Along the way, you can feel Bali is still a very small town in a developing country (much like the towns you'll see if you step out of Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia or Seoul in Korea).

Once inside Nusa Dua, the feeling totally changed. Nusa Dua is an area with several hotels (Hyatt, Westin, Putra Bali etc) each

with their own beach and 5mins away from each another by car or 10-15min by walking. (The weather might be a bit too hot to walk in the afternoon however).

Security is tied – Nusa Dua is an encapsulated area so there are security check point before entering the area. Each hotel also has another security post which check every vehicle entering their hotel. The security guard will examine the booth and also under the car. Additionally, Westin (the recommended hotel next to the BICC) also implemented a third security check point before entering the hotel.



The first stop of the day is the venue itself, Bali International Conventional Center. BICC is next to Westin hotel and is a fairly large conventional center with two floors, two auditorium (the smaller of which is probably sufficient for APRICOT) and many smaller rooms around it.

There is also a large exhibition room span across two floor which is large enough to serve lunch for the delegation and space left



over for terminals and demo booth. Most of the small meeting rooms are on the second floor and there are plenty of spaces for interaction.

The meeting rooms are pretty standard from 50pax to 150pax and more than sufficient for APRICOT needs. There is also sufficient power outlet at every corner in the conventional center and also in the interaction area. In fact, part of it is already has wireless internet access provided by one of the local ISPs.

Westin Hotel is actually connected to BICC by a walkway (they are under the same management). Westin is a 5 star hotel with large space – indoor and outdoor restaurants, nice pool which is next to the beach, Between the pool and the beach would be an excellent place to host one of the social event.



The only problem with Westin is that it does not have a lot of rooms – only 200 rooms at ~US\$150/night. This means there would be a lot of delegates who needs to stay at second hotel like Hyatt or at a cheaper hotel like Putra Bali. Fortunately, all of these are within 5mins car ride from each another.



Hyatt on the other hand is a huge hotel, 600 rooms if need to be covering a huge area (walking from one end to the other takes 10min). It is also right next to the budget Putra Bali (their beach front are connected). Unfortunately, the convention center offers by Hyatt is too small for our current need (only one ball room with a few other meeting rooms) although the executives mention there is plan underway to build a secondary convention center within the Hyatt premises by 2006. If so, Hyatt would be a

much better choice of location pulling everyone together in one single location.



There are two proposed budget hotel – one within Nusa Dua, Putra Bali (5min to Westin/BICC, next to Hyatt) and one just outside Nusa Dua (15min to BICC/Hyatt), Ramada Benoa. Both are *four stars* hotel featuring their own beach, great rooms at unbelievable prices of US\$30-40/night. It would be one of the best hotel our fellows will ever stay if that's the case.

Bali is also extremely rich in culture and could offer excellent social event. Hyatt, for example, offers a variety of “theme” social event that is held within their own beach or one a patch of grassland along the sea 5mins away which can handle up to 1000 people at US\$80/pax.

Over the 2 day I was in Bali, I asked several questions:

The first question is why Bali over Jakarta where most of the ISPs are located (Bali only has a handful ISPs although they are in the process of setting up a Bali Internet Exchange). APIIJ explained that Bali is sufficient far away from Jakarta so that engineers would not be distracted by the day-to-day activities and could focus on the conference. It is also not too far that it is expensive – there are budget airlines which travel between Jakarta and Bali for less than US\$50. APIIJ is confident to get sufficient large number of Indonesia ISPs and network engineers to participate in Bali. (It is also hard to find a place to hosts APRICOT in Jakarta that isn't too expensive).

The second question is security. I feel extremely safe in Bali despite all the horrible stories said about it (Incidentally, Bali was not hit by the Tsunami). APIIJ arranged a meeting with the chief of police who explained all the security measures taken since the Bali bombing and that has been assuring. Unfortunately, a lot of government have recommended not to fly to Indonesia and they have not take them out of the list yet. Despite so, they have hosted several International meetings (ASEAN meeting, APEC etc) and several large companies like IBM, Singtel have hosted their staff retreat in Bali.

The third question is if Indonesia could wait to a latter date, say 2008 or 2009. APIIJ feels that Indonesia Internet industry is finally showing sign of taking off (nearly 500,000

Internet users now) and it is important to build up capability. Aside, they also have a separate agenda – Indonesia government is trying very much to interfere with the Internet industry (now it is getting interesting) and APIIJ is trying very hard to convince the government that the industry can do a better job by self-regulation. That's one of the reasons for the strong activities from APIIJ lately and the keen interest to bid for APRICOT 2007.

[APIIJ also run the Internet Exchange in Indonesia for their members (ISPs) and also hosted IDNIC doing .id registration. They also organize a smaller technical meeting yearly much like APRICOT.]

Conclusion

I am comfortable with the proposed location – the convention center, the hotels have all impressed me greatly. I am also convinced that Bali is a better location than Jakarta given the short distance and cheap hotels.

I am also confident of the people behind APIIJ proposing to do APRICOT and they have given me a sense they are sincerely trying to do something good for Indonesia Internet industry.

I also feel very safe in Bali during my two days, after witnessing the security checks imposed firsthand. But safe or not safe, my concern is whether APRICOT sponsors and the usual international participants/speakers (e.g. Cisco) would be willing to come to Bali. For that, I am not too sure.