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By Terrence Voon

SINGAPORE companies are rallying behind the Republic's bid to host the 2010 Youth Olympic Games (YOG) by putting their money where their mouth is.

At their own expense, the private sector is printing and distributing materials to help publicise Singapore's candidacy.

These include T-shirts, car decals, posters and stickers featuring the national flower Vanda Miss Joaquim, which is the official bid logo.

Said Elim Chew, founder of streetwear retailer 77th Street: 'We're part of the community as well. It's also a dream come true for us to support the bid, because it will ultimately benefit the whole country.'

She was among the 110 representatives from 80 companies that pledged their support for the bid after a breakfast networking session yesterday.

Local firms like Sakae Sushi and ornamental fish breeder Qian Hu were also represented, together with multi-nationals like Samsung, Coca-Cola and McDonald's.

Three other sessions, also organised by the Singapore 2010 bid committee, will be held in the coming weeks.

Yesterday's event was hosted by Parliamentary Secretary (Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports) Teo Ser Luck, who said staging the YOG would generate sports marketing opportunities.

He said: 'Businesses can align themselves with the Games to build their brands and achieve their business objectives - not only locally, but also internationally.'

Under the bidding rules, candidate cities are not allowed to advertise their bids, said Kelven Tan, head of the Singapore Sports Council's sport marketing group.

But, by showing their support, companies can help to trumpet Singapore's bid in other ways.

He said: 'In this way, we can export Singapore's bid logo all over the world.'

Qian Hu, for example, plans to use the logo on the materials it sends to its distribution networks in Malaysia, Thailand and China.

Said Kenny Yap, its executive chairman and managing director: 'It's not often we get a chance to help Singapore on something that's on a global scale.'

Qian Hu is willing to spend up to \$20,000 to market the logo.

To build up the hype, 77th Street has assembled a team of local designers to create T-shirts inspired by the bid. It is also putting up posters and stickers at its retail outlets.

Volunteer group CityCare is making 50,000 car decals to be given away, and Chew hopes other companies will follow suit.

'I've spoken to Lawrence (Leow), president of the Association of Small and Medium Enterprises, and he has promised to get all the SMEs here to help,' she said.

On Monday, the International Olympic Committee will unveil the short-list of candidate cities. The winner will be announced in February.

'We are in for a tough race,' said Mr Teo. 'The competition is stepping up, so we also need to step up our pace, and get support from Singaporeans, the private sector and volunteer organisations.'