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AN Industry Digital Plan (IDP) launched for logistics SMEs (small and medium enterprises) on Wednesday will offer a network of common parcel lockers for the e-commerce ecosystem, and also a platform that enables large shippers to sell unused cargo space at a discount to smaller shippers.

The IDP, part of Singapore's Logistics Industry Transformation Map, was unveiled by the Infocomm Media Development Authority (IMDA).

For starters, it is an online guide that provides step-by-step advice to logistics SMEs on the digital solutions required at each stage of their business growth in the digital economy.

Through the IDP, IMDA will continue to put up pre-approved digital solutions (in customer management or data analytics, for example) on Tech Depot, a one-stop platform for tech solutions under the SME Portal website.

A complementary self-assessment checklist will be made available on the SME Portal, which SMEs can use to assess their digital readiness and to identify digitalisation opportunities.

The IDP will also guide logistics SMEs in taking part in national projects and initiatives that aim to "uplift the whole sector".

Examples of these initiatives are Federated Lockers (common parcel lockers that will reduce door-to-door deliveries) and In-mall Distribution (stationing a logistics operator within a mall to receive and consolidate all delivered goods and provide last-mile delivery to retail shops).

Punggol and Bukit Panjang have been identified as pilot sites for Federated Lockers. The IMDA will put out a Request for Proposal by year's end.

The six-to-12-month pilot, to go live in the second half of 2018, will offer 75 lockers at the start; the network will be expanded later to 760 lockers across the island.

IMDA told *The Business Times*: "Both estates are good pilot sites for the trial: Punggol is a relatively new and growing estate, with many young residents likely to embrace e-commerce. With young working families, there is also high likelihood that the consumers will not be at home to receive their purchases.

"Bukit Panjang offers a good mix of people from the different age groups – grandparents, young parents, young married couples and young working adults."

Concurrently, IMDA will call a tender to deploy an "interoperable platform" to provide secured, open access to the parcel lockers in the network. BT understands that the platform must be accessible by merchants, marketplaces, logistics-service providers and end-consumers, without the need to interact directly with the proprietary locker network.

To support In-mall Distribution, the IMDA is collaborating with the Singapore Management University, Fujitsu and A*Star to develop a solution to optimise deliveries into malls and offsite consolidation centres.

The platform to sell unused cargo space is a tripartite partnership among the IMDA, the Singapore-based e-freight platform provider VCargo Cloud, France-based Bollore Logistics (Singapore), Taiwan-based Dimerco Express (Singapore) and US-based insurance brokerage firm LCH Lockton.

The IMDA said: "As major logistics players, these companies will lead SME clients through the digitalisation process using VCargo Cloud's Cargo Consolidation Platform, which will help SME freight forwarders or shippers lower freight rates and develop internal capabilities and efficiencies."

The Logistics IDP, developed by IMDA with support from the Singapore Economic Development Board and Spring Singapore, is part of the S\$80-million SMEs Go Digital Programme. It is also the first of many blueprints planned under Singapore's effort to restructure its economy.

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