

## BERLI JUCKER EYES CARREFOUR OPERATIONS IN SE ASIA

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THE NATION

Berli Jucker, the manufacturing and trading conglomerate owned by liquor tycoon Charoen Sirivadhanabhakdi, yesterday expressed strong interest in joining the bidding to acquire Carrefour's operations in Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia.

President Aswin Techajareonvikul said the company had been approached by Carrefour's financial adviser for the bidding, which would be held soon.

He said the company had, however, not yet received any details of the bidding or acquisition timetable from the French hypermarket giant. It is evaluating the merits of an acquisition, in which many other companies have also showed an interest.

"We are considering joining the bidding for Carrefour, as this new retail business would help us to fulfil [the potential of] our existing businesses, especially consumer goods. It will also create value for Berli Jucker in the long term," said Aswin.

Carrefour intends selling all its operations in Southeast Asia: in Thailand, where it operates nearly 40 stores; in Malaysia, where it has more than 20 stores; and in Singapore, where it has two stores.

"We are considering bidding for Carrefour's operations in Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore," said Aswin.

Aswin said Berli Jucker had set a more aggressive strategy of penetrating many potential markets in Asean, especially Vietnam, both through organic investment as well as joint ventures and acquisitions.

"We will invest between Bt300 million and Bt400 million this year in our regional expansion," he said.

He added that the company expected the contribution from overseas business to increase significantly from only 5 to 6 per cent last year to about 50 per cent of the company's sales in five years.

Berli Jucker achieved Bt23 billion in sales last year, of which 47 per cent was from industrial products, 31 per cent from consumer goods and about 20 per cent from healthcare. The company expects to achieve at least 10-per-cent growth this year.

"We will conclude another deal in acquiring a local trading company for consumer products in Vietnam in the next two months," said the president. "We will also invest about Bt100 million in a new converting plant for finished tissue products in Ho Chi Min City."

He said the regional expansion was in line with a strategy to evaluate opportunities for forward and backward integration and the constant introduction of new products and services. With regional expansion, the company will search for joint-venture partnerships and merger and acquisition opportunities.

"We are making Vietnam our hub in exploring businesses, especially for glass and consumer products, in neighboring countries, such as Laos and Cambodia. The move is aimed at benefiting from lower logistics costs and free-trade agreements in the region," said Aswin.

Berli Jucker yesterday announced the completion of the acquisition of Malaya Glass Products.

This will make it the largest manufacturer and marketer of glass packaging in Southeast Asia by operating five glass-manufacturing plants in Thailand, Vietnam and Malaysia with a combined daily production capacity of 3,300 tonnes.