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MIMOS: GRID COMPUTING FOR EVERYONE

By JO TIMBUONG

KUALA LUMPUR: If applied research body Mimos Bhd gets its way, computing power will be a utility just like water and electricity are now.

Computing power, it said, can be of benefit to everyone and not just to members of the scientific and technology communities.

"It should be as easily available as water and electricity are in our homes and offices today," said Thillai Raj, Mimos vice-president of software development and central engineering.

Mimos' National Grid Computing (NGC) initiative is working to achieve this goal.

Grid computing is about harnessing the collective computing power from each and every machine on a huge network that may encompass whole buildings, states, or even countries.

Aside from providing a large amount of computing power on tap, grid computing would also translate to more storage space for data for every computer user, said Mimos.

According to the research body, Malaysia is lagging in this technology.

"We need to leapfrog ahead," said Thillai, "and make grid computing as widely available as possible."

The plan includes making the technology user-friendly to the country's small- and medium-scale enterprises, as well as corporate users.

Such users, said Thillai, would benefit from grid computing in the same way that scientists do now.

"The extra data storage space and enhanced computing power would help these companies slash their spending on computers," he said.

Thillai said it would also help companies retrieve lost data if they were affected by natural disasters, such as floods and earthquakes, because duplicates of the information would be on other computers on the grid.

"Manufacturing industries would also benefit from more accurate results when they use grid computing," he said.

According to Mimos, it is working on a security feature for grid computing users, so that unauthorised parties would be unable to access their data on the network.

It expects to have the NGC initiative operational by 2009, and plans to have local research institutes, government agencies and industries test the system between then and now.

Currently, scientists around the world use the power of grid computing to help them research cures for diseases, predict the weather, and other scientific work.

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**THILLAI RAJ,
MIMOS VICE-
PRESIDENT OF
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DEVELOPMENT
AND CENTRAL
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EASILY AVAILABLE: Tenaga Nasional Bhd powerlines. If Mimos gets its way, computing power will be a utility just like electricity is now.