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COMPUTER GRID GROWS IN POWER

By JO TIMBUONG

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia's grid computing system, comprising several thousand CPUs in the main cluster at Mimos Bhd's Technology Park Malaysia headquarters, has been linked to a European Union-supported grid called the Enabling Grids for E-Science (EGEE).

Mimos, an applied research organisation, said its KnowledgeGrid gains a substantial increase in computing power from the link up with EGEE, which is made up of several clusters located in Germany, Britain,

Austria, Turkey, the Netherlands, Italy and other nations.

Researchers in this country will also now be able to collaborate more efficiently and easily with their counterparts in those foreign countries, thanks to the larger computing grid.

KnowledgeGrid, added Mimos, can also cater to more users and projects.

According to Mimos, KnowledgeGrid went through a three-month vetting process with EGEE to assess its performance and security qualities recently.

"It had to meet several requirements, such as data fidelity, before it got the green light to join the European network," said Ng Kwang Ming, Mimos senior manager for grid computing.

"It also had to achieve assessment algorithms precisely," he added.

However, the achievement will not stop Mimos from further improving KnowledgeGrid because EGEE will continue to monitor its compatibility.

"It is not a one-off process. EGEE will constantly reassess the performance quality of KnowledgeGrid to ensure that it is on par with the European grid," Ng said.

Relatively untouched

Despite its computing power, KnowledgeGrid is being under-utilised by Malaysian researchers and industries.

"There are very few users on the grid now because many (businesses and industries) still don't understand how the KnowledgeGrid can help them (in R&D work)," said Abdul Rahman Ahmad Dahlan, director of grid computing at Mimos.

To tell more organisations about the benefits of grid computing, Mimos is organising its inaugural Grid Computing Conference (GCC), that will be held in conjunction with the World Congress on Information Technology 2008 (WCIT 2008) here next month.

Speakers from international bodies such as the Open Grid Forum, German D-Grid, Pacific Rim Applications, Thai National Grid Centre and EGEE, have been invited to present at the GCC on May 15-16 at the Palace of the Golden Horses in Seri Kembangan.

Luminaries from the local academia and digital content industry will also share with attendees their experiences with grid computing and how such networks have aided their work.

Attendance is by invitation only, but Mimos said it has selected its guests from a wide spectrum of industries that would benefit from grid computing.

Abdul Rahman said the GCC would also be a good platform for local scientists and industry players to rub shoulders with their international counterparts and to discuss various topics, as well as share experiences.

Mimos believes that harnessing the power of grid computing will make industries more agile and competitive, as well help keep R&D costs lower.

"Industries would be able to keep the bulk of their IT budgets for other aspects of product development because KnowledgeGrid would meet most of their computing needs," Abdul

Rahman said. Mimos expects the two-day conference to attract about 300 local and foreign delegates.

Worldwide appeal

WCIT is a bi-annual global ICT (information and communications technology) forum that brings together global leaders in business, government and the academia.

Billed as the Olympics of the ICT industry, it hopes to encourage global economic and social development through the exchange of policies and ideas on technology.

WCIT 2008 is scheduled to take place at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre from May 18 to 22. For more information, go to

www.wcit2008.org.

It is jointly organised by the Multimedia Development Corporation (MDeC) and the Association of the Computer and Multimedia Industry of Malaysia (Pikom), with the support of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation.

First held in Barcelona in 1978, WCIT is under the patronage of the World Information Technology and Services Alliance (Witsa), a consortium of 60 ICT industry associations worldwide.



NEW DEVELOPMENTS: (From left) Ng, Mimos vice-president of software development and central engineering Thillai Raj and Abdul Rahman briefing the media on KnowledgeGrid.

»Many businesses and industries still don't understand how the KnowledgeGrid can help them in R&D work«

ABDUL RAHMAN AHMAD DAHLAN,
DIRECTOR OF GRID COMPUTING AT MIMOS