Grid going SOA

Grid computing technology is set to become the knowledge infrastructure for the nation as part of the aspirations of the National Grid Initiative. Spearheaded by Mimos, the Initiative's goal is to realise a national information technology utility service. The research and development outfit says it aims to create a grid technology platform that provides 'secure, dependable, consistent, pervasive and inexpensive access to computational and data capabilities' throughout the country.

To this end, Mimos has decided to employ the Service-Oriented Architecture (SOA) model, which will enable seamless resource provisioning over a shared infrastructure. Grid computing can connect minds to create a brain gain, and universities will be connected so that virtual research and collaboration can be achieved.

Although the Initiative will benefit universities which will all be connected to the grid platform, industries are ultimately expected to gain. Businesses are becoming more customer-centric and content-driven, and require new tools to be competitive.

'Businesses have to use global tools to become global players. We want to put the best on the grid to share with the industry,' says Mimos President and Chief Executive Officer, Abdul Wahab Abdullah.

Grid computing through the SOA model can act as a single platform to service the many market verticals. The efficient sharing of resources, in turn, helps reduce research cost which will be a boon for local companies aiming to create world-class technology and services.

Content drive

The platform is of course futile without content, and Mimos wants the grid to be a content aggregator. 'We complement the goals of Malaysian Information, Communications and Multimedia Services 886 (MyICMS 886), and will not duplicate the efforts of other agencies and ministries. Content is important,' says Abdul Wahab.

MyICMS 886 is a strategic blueprint for the communications and multimedia industry between 2006 through 2010. The industry-driven initiative will leverage existing policies and programmes.

Mimos is currently working with some multinational companies such as Altair Engineering and SGI on rolling out grid computing using the SOA model, and has targeted a national rollout in the first quarter of 2009. The Grid Computing Initiative is under the Ninth Malaysia Plan, and grid computing is one of Mimos' eight technology thrust areas.

The industries that can benefit from it do not stop at the information communication technology and other electrical and electronic-related industries. The farming community can access applications such as Agribazaar through the National Grid Initiative to carry out secure transactions. Biotechnology players can also utilise the grid to do drug design with lower cost. Other applications envisioned include

weather modelling and earthquake simulation.

'The country needs these tools in an innovation-driven economy. With knowledge, you can control the economy, and we must collectively be innovative to get things done,' says Abdul Wahab. An attendant benefit is the creation of new businesses along the way, he adds.

Mimos is currently working on enhancing the middleware to work on an SOA model. The ambitious timeframe to get the Initiative off and running, as well as the question of there really being a demand for it does not faze Abdul Wahab.

'We must not adopt a wait and see attitude. We have to think about how we are going to make things happen. Mimos is doing its best and we believe we can deliver,' he says. **mb-e**

ABDUL WAHAB: Global tools needed to create global players