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KnowledgeGrid to give M'sia the competitive edge

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KUALA LUMPUR: Imagine this, you log onto a computer grid and you would be able to access information and applications that will do wonders for your business.

Known as the KnowledgeGrid, it is a distributed system where computing resources are shared across networks and it enables selection, aggregation and sharing of information resources in multiple administrative domain and geographical areas.

While the web enables universal and transparent access to documents, the grid promises to do so for computing resources.

A Mimos project, KnowledgeGrid aims to provide super computing power to the country, highest level of cyberspace security, cost efficiency on capital investment for knowledge infrastructure and create new web industries through pay-per-use.

According to Mimos president and chief executive officer Datuk Abdul Wahab Abdullah, one can also share computational power through the grid.

"If you need to do more processing, you can take or borrow more power from the grid. For example, in the making of the new Proton Persona, the simulation models took a long time. Some had to be sent overseas to test the aerodynamics, the airflow and the impact crash test.

"If they want to run on their system, they need a high-powered computer. They (Proton) came to us to use the resource to run the computational power to do the simulations. This is how we provide the resources to the end users," he said.

The processing speed and power are expected to lend an edge to those in industries such as animation and research and development.

Abdul Wahab gave another example of the animation industry which needs time to do the rendering process. "By connecting to us, they can use the super computer power to do the rendering with quicker results," he added.

While the KnowledgeGrid will help to save time in terms of obtaining results, it will also help businesses especially the smaller ones to save cost.

"Some tools are expensive for small

company. With us putting the tools on the grid, the businesses can now use and pay per design.

"We provide the infrastructure and you can use it to do your work," said Abdul Wahab, adding that this was in line with the Science, Technology and Innovation Ministry's policy that encouraged people to innovate and produce ideas that could be commercialised.

He added that products featured on the KnowledgeGrid would be customer-centric.

"We have to do a lot of tailoring according to customers' needs. It is a service-oriented architecture. If in the Internet we just talk about contents. Here it will give you content, applications, service and computational power," said Abdul Wahab.

He added that it would be the first grid in the world with all these features. Presently, there are over 100 academic and research grids.

He said the various industries would be able to use the modern tools in doing the day-to-day work.

"These tools will help our people to be global players. We will look at what the market needs and see what tech-

nology needs to be on the grid. This technology will sustain us for a long period before the next generation of technology comes in," he added.

Mimos is in collaboration with US-based Altair Engineering, which has helped produced the super computer and computational resources that support the space programme for Nasa, in developing a portal to distribute the computing powers.

The pilot project has been tested in universities and some industries for the past eight months.

Abdul Wahab hopes to roll out KnowledgeGrid to a bigger audience including the various state ICT centres by 2009. Industries such as those in bioresearch, agricultural, structural designs, animation, medicine, businesses and finance are expected to benefit from the grid.

Although Mimos is developing the grid, the management would be left to another party. "Mimos will make it happen but the management will be given to another company," said Abdul Wahab adding that the search was on for a party to manage the grid.

The pay-per-use system as adopted

by utility companies would be employed. "The users need only to log onto a portal, click whatever you want. You will be billed in terms of tools and hours. It is just like an electricity bill," he explained.

"The security feature in the grid is higher than the Internet. It has the public infrastructure key, private key, application key, hardware key and we are working on an internal core that we can isolate the computer to provide another layer of protection," he added.

The system would also be able to segmentalise users in order to make sure that the right people are using the correct tools.

Asked on the amount sent on this frontier technology project, Abdul Wahab refused to disclose the sum but said that it would be funded under the 9th Malaysia Plan.

"We want to develop and stimulate the growth of the indigenous industry in ICT. We don't have enough R&D. In order to compete, we must be loaded with the tools to compete with the global market. We are here to serve businesses with cutting-edge technology," said Abdul Wahab.