

## Straits Times (7 June 2007) - Soon, companies can tap national PC network

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Soon, companies can tap national PC network

Firms will pay to use computing power needed for complex work and animation

By Feng Zeng Kun

BY EARLY next year, companies will be able to tap a national level network of computers to give them the processing power they need.

This network - called 'grid computing' in tech-speak - will link several hundred computers in various locations and pool their processing power.

When up, the network should provide enough computing power to crunch six months' worth of animation work into one month.

The grand plan is that companies will then be able to access this power on a pay-per-use basis - much like turning on your tap for water.

To make sure it all works, a high-level committee has been set up to get all the grid players, whether user or provider, to talk to each other.

Headed by Defence Science and Technology Agency chief Richard Lim - who is a key player in the research and development sector here - the National Grid Advisory Council will ensure the national grid is ready to go by early next year.

The idea of a national grid was first discussed as far back as 2003.

Companies say grid computing is essential for the future.

Mr Tang Chi Sim, owner of Omens Studios - which does commercials and animation - said that it was financially impossible for small companies like his to afford the amount of computing power he needs.

'We need to move on, compete with the rest of the world. So this makes economic sense because we all link up and share the power and costs.'

The National Library Board, for example, has used grid computing to great advantage. It did five months' worth of archiving in a mere seven days in October last year.

According to industry players The Straits Times spoke to yesterday, the biotechnology and animation industries are likely to benefit from the new network because they traditionally have massive computing needs.

These sectors have also been marked as growth areas for Singapore's economy.

The local biotechnology industry, for instance, recorded double digit growth last year.

In the interim, local grids have popped up. For instance, the National University of Singapore already has its own Terra-Scale Computing Grid, with 3,000 computers linked up.

This number already exceeds the planned national grid's network.

A spokesman for the National Grid Office yesterday declined to say if the local grids would be integrated into the national network.

However, deputy chief executive and director-general of the Infocomm Development Authority, Mr Leong Keng Thai, said yesterday that the grid, when launched, will be 'comprehensive' and available to all.

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