

## High-tech platform starts on Nov 1

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— Mr Kok



Three grid computing offerings launched by SCS, NewMedia Express, PTC System and their partners promise cheaper and more flexible IT ownership, reports **ONG BOON KIAT**

SINGAPORE'S first commercial grid computing platform will kick off on Nov 1, promising a cheaper IT ownership model and propelling Singapore to the forefront of such nationwide commercial grid platforms.

Three consortia - led by local companies Singapore Computer Systems (SCS), NewMedia Express and PTC System - have announced that their platforms will be ready from this Saturday. The SCS consortium which includes Hewlett-Packard (HP) announced its service in a media briefing yesterday; while the other two groups disclosed their plans to BizIT in separate interviews this week.

At the SCS-HP media briefing yesterday, SCS executive vice-president, International, Alvin Kok, said the National

Grid initiative couldn't have come at a more appropriate juncture, with businesses now increasingly feeling the pressures of cost-cutting.

"During this financial crisis, businesses are looking at how they can conserve cash but yet they still need to grow," Mr Kok said. The new grid-based service will let businesses do exactly that, by letting them save on capital expenditure, he said.

Businesses are not required to fork out upfront investment on hardware and software licences, since both hardware and software are owned by the providers. As they only need pay a subscription fee to use the software and services, they will additionally be able to save on the "cost of funds" - the interest paid on outstanding loans.

The three consortia were named by the Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore (IDA) in June as designated providers of the National Grid initiative. This is Singapore's first large scale commercial grid computing offering. During the initiative's unveiling at the CommunicAsia tradeshow, the government promised to buy up to 40 per cent of the platform's available capacity. The consortia's offerings will be easily accessible by businesses via a broadband connection. Security stringent enough to meet business requirements is also promised.

The SCS-HP platform is dubbed Alatum, or Latin for "winged". It will launch with some 20 partners onboard. These vendors - among them technology bigwigs such as Microsoft, Oracle and Salesforce.com - will provide a wide variety of on-demand and subscription-based IT offerings, the consortium said yesterday.

Alatum offers an initial computing horsepower of 2,400 CPU cores and 16TB of storage, but will grow to meet demand, according to Mr Kok. He added that the HP-SCS consortium aims to garner 70 partners and 700 local and regional customers by 2011.

Homegrown Internet solutions firm NewMedia Express's offering is dubbed NGRID Services. Like Alatum, NGRID is a diverse palette of on-demand software and services. On tap are offerings from Microsoft, VMware, Cpanel, 1-Net Singapore, Advanced ERP and others. These services will run on an infrastructure comprising 200 CPU cores and 10TB of storage.

According to Alan Woo, chief technology officer and co-founder of NewMedia Express, take-up is expected to be bullish. He expects about \$100,000 in sales for the first six months of launch, and \$1.1 million in revenue in two years. Besides NewMedia Express, other NGRID members are Fujitsu Asia, Microsoft, 1-Net Singapore and Advanced ERP.

The third National Grid provider, local data management solutions vendor PTC System, is offering a more focused computing flavour. Its platform, dubbed PTC SaaS, will provide largely storage hosting and archival services. It will have 12TB of storage capacity at launch.

PTC managing director SS Lim told BizIT the service targets both research institutes and commercial organisations. He added that the company is looking to work with other cloud storage partners on the platform in future.

The National Grid - part of the government's Intelligent Nation 2015 (iN2015) infocomm masterplan - is expected to be a success, given the sizable support promised by IDA. At a news conference in June at CommunicAsia, IDA assistant chief executive Khoong Hock Yun said agencies such as the Ministry of Defence and National Library Board are expected to become users.

"We also anticipate the manufacturing, digital media and even hospital sectors to be looking at testing it," said Mr Khoong. By 2011, over 3,000 small and medium-sized enterprises could become users of this high-tech platform, according to IDA.

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### What's in store for grid computing users

#### Alatum

POWERED by hardware comprising 2,400 CPU cores and 16TB of storage, Alatum delivers a variety of computing power, storage and software offerings on a pay-per-use, on-demand and online basis. These offerings are provided by Actuate, Aksaas, AlpSoft, Avartis, BLC Solutions, Citrix Systems, Klik Technologies, Haley, IBM with Cnetric, iZeno, Melioris, Microsoft, NetSuite, Oracle, Philip Tang & Sons, Platform Computing, Red Hat and Salesforce.com. The platform also includes SingTel as connectivity provider.

#### PTC SaaS

THIS platform provides storage hosting and data archival offering, with 12TB of storage capacity on tap. It is operated by homegrown data management and IT service provider and consultant PTC System.

#### NGRID Services

KEY components on this platform are virtualisation, SaaS applications and Microsoft applications offered via a hosted model. The platform is powered by 200 CPU cores and 10TB of storage capacity. On tap are applications and services from Microsoft, VMware, Parallels, Cpanel, Advanced ERP, Pantropic, Mondarlez Cyber Media, 1-Net Singapore and Accolade Global.

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