IT BUSINESS

Samsung Setstle $90 Million Lawsuit

Memory chip maker Samsung Electronics of South Korea agreed to pay US$90 million to settle civil charges that it conspired with six other computer chip makers to fix prices, the US attorneys general of 41 states announced.

The six other companies have yet to settle with the states, which are pursuing the case in US Federal District Court in San Francisco.

The civil case is one of many that grew out of a criminal prosecution in which three Samsung executives pleaded guilty and were sent to prison for overcharging for memory chips from April 1999 to June 2002. Four executives of another company, Hynix Semiconductor, were also convicted.

The conspiracy came to light after Micron Technology applied to the Justice Department for amnesty, escaping indictment for itself and its executives and in return disclosing how the seven companies exchanged information to override market forces that were pushing chip prices lower.

The other companies involved included Infineon Technologies, Mosel Vitelic, Nanya Technology, Elpida Memory, and NEC Electronics America.

Novell Could Face Linux Ban

According to Reuters, The Free Software Foundation is reviewing Novell Inc.’s right to sell new versions of Linux operating system software after the open-source community criticized Novell for teaming up with Microsoft Corp.

“The community of people wants to do anything they can to interfere with this deal and all deals like it. They have every reason to be deeply concerned that this is the beginning of a significant patent aggression by Microsoft,” Eben Moglen, the foundation’s general counsel, told Reuters.

The foundation controls intellectual property rights to key parts of the open-source Linux operating system.

Novell angered members of the open-source community that develops Linux and other free software programs in November when it entered a wide-ranging business deal with Microsoft.

Google to Challenge Office “Soon”

Google Vice President and General Manager of the Enterprise David Girouard, in a speech to the Massachusetts Technology Leadership Council, said that Google is putting together a suite of Web-based software products to sell to businesses that includes e-mail, calendar, word processing, spreadsheet, instant messaging, and voice-over-IP.

He did not say how much it would cost, what it would be called, when it would arrive—other than “soon”—or how it would differ from Google Apps for Your Domain, which Google already gives away for free.

Forrester Research thinks that the best Google can do is acquire 1 percent to 2 percent of the market in the next two years.

VeriSign Plans $100 Million Upgrade

VeriSign, which manages the .com and .net domain names registry and ensures Internet users can reach those locations, said it will spend more than $100 million in an infrastructure upgrade to combat a new wave of computer attacks and manage a surge in online activity.

The company said the expansion will increase its ability to process Domain Name System queries from 400 billion a day to more than 4 trillion a day. Those queries occur every time Internet users click on a .com or .net Web site or check e-mail and use applications that utilize those domain names.

VeriSign said it currently processes 24 billion such interactions daily. The investment also will boost bandwidth on VeriSign’s systems from more than 20 gigabits per second to more than 200 gigabits per second.

The upgrade is part of VeriSign’s initiative to expand and diversify the capacity of its global Internet infrastructure by 10 times by the year 2010.

According to a VeriSign press release, in 2007 and 2008 alone, cyber attacks are expected to increase in size and scope by 50 percent each year, creating new threats to economic and national security. These include incidents that threaten governments, such as last year’s attacks that hacked US government Web sites.
ACQUISITIONS

Polycom Buys SpectraLink for $228.9 Million

Polycom, a video-conferencing gear maker, plans to buy SpectraLink Corp. for about $228.9 million to gain wireless-telephone technology. SpectraLink holders will receive $11.75 a share, the two companies said in a statement. With SpectraLink’s products, Polycom hopes to increase sales to customers such as Microsoft Corp. and IBM. Polycom expects the transaction to close in the second quarter.

Skyway, GT Software Join Forces

Skyway Software, a provider of service-oriented architecture (SOA) design and delivery, and GT Software, a provider of rapid SOA development tools for mainframes, announced a formal partnership encompassing sales, marketing, and product integration. The combination of Skyway SOA Platform and GT Software’s Ivory product offers a new element to the SOA marketplace—a solution that can build new services, assemble existing services, and manage and govern reuse across multiple platforms from any type of data source, including mainframes.

Skyway Software’s SOA architecture model, Web 2.0 application model, and model-driven environment create an agile and service-centric development solution. A key product differentiator is that the Skyway SOA platform builds new and assembles existing services, while other solutions only assemble composite services, according to a Skyway press release. The platform also manages and governs reuse across multiple platforms from any type of data source. These capabilities result in projects being completed at high speeds and savings.

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A study by the University of Maryland’s A. James Clark School of Engineering quantifies the near-constant rate of hacker attacks of computers with Internet access—every 39 seconds on average—and the nonsecure usernames and passwords that give attackers more chance of success.

The study, conducted by Michel Cukier, Clark School assistant professor of mechanical engineering, profiled the behavior of “brute force” hackers who use simple software-aided techniques to randomly attack large numbers of computers.

Cukier and two of his graduate students set up weak security on four Linux computers with Internet access, then recorded what happened as the individual machines were attacked.

“Root” was the top username guess by dictionary scripts—attempted 12 times as often as the second-place “admin.” Successful “root” access would open the entire computer to the hacker, whereas “admin” would grant access to somewhat lesser administrative privileges. Other top usernames in the hackers’ scripts were “test,” “guest,” “info,” “adm,” “mysql,” “user,” “administrator,” and “oracle.”

The researchers found the most common password-guessing ploy was to reenter or try variations of the username. About 43 percent of all password-guessing attempts simply reentered the username. The username followed by “123” was the second most-trying choice. Other common passwords attempted included “123456,” “password,” “1234,” “12345,” “passwd,” “123,” “test,” and “1.”
**ENTERPRISE**

**Open Source Companies Form Non-Profit Industry Group**

EnterpriseDB, an enterprise-class database maker, has joined other open source companies to establish a non-profit industry organization called the Open Solutions Alliance (OSA).

The mission of the OSA is to promote enterprise adoption of open source-based business solutions. The organization’s members will work to improve interoperability among open source-based software products, to align open source communities with the OSA’s goals of open source interoperability and innovation, and to conduct joint marketing programs to promote enterprise awareness of open source-based business solutions.

The 10 companies that have joined the organization as founding members are Adaptive Planning, Centric CRM, CollabNet, EnterpriseDB, Hyperic, JasperSoft, Openbravo, SourceForge.net, SpikeSource, and Talend. Other companies interested in joining should contact membership@OpenSolutionsAlliance.org or visit www.OpenSolutionsAlliance.org.

**LINUX**

**Xandros Releases Suite of Bridging Tools**

Xandros, a provider of Linux desktop, server, and management solutions, has released BridgeWays—a suite of next-generation, cross-platform and cross-service, workflow-driven and rules-based, management products and integration frameworks. The suite lets data center managers and system administrators, with typical Windows administration skills, configure and support an optimal mix of Linux, Unix, and Windows platforms, systems, and services.

According to Xandros, without such sophisticated bridging tools, a heterogeneous computing environment can devolve into an unmanageable and costly-to-administer set of silo infrastructure components.

Xandros BridgeWays for Red Hat, Oracle, Xandros, and Debian, with Windows Active Directory Integration, currently in beta, will ship in the spring.

**SERVERS**

**IBM Debuts Midrange Server with Efficiency Goal**

IBM has released a new IBM Power5 processor-based midrange server aimed at dramatically improving IT efficiency and reducing the energy, space, and system costs that can accompany the proliferation of x86 Linux servers.

Able to handle as many as 160 virtual server images at one time per system using the optional Advanced Power Virtualization (APV) feature, the new 1.8 GHz IBM System p5 560Q (16-core) is the most powerful member of a new family of three Web-tier consolidation solutions.

These solutions include the IBM BladeCenter JS21 for Web Serving Farms solution, with as many as 14 blades per system for the middle and low end, and Express Offerings that start with just a single PowerPC processor-based blade or 1U rack system. All three Web-tier consolidation solutions use IBM’s APV to allow as many as 10 virtual server images per core.

The p5 560Q also has advanced Remote Access Service features including built-in redundancy and superior design, helping to provide higher application availability and meet demanding client service level agreements. The system offers the ability to run the AIX 5L operating systems, Red Hat Enterprise, or Novell SUSE Enterprise Linux operating systems, or any combination of the three.

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HARDWARE
MIT Pursues Optics on a Chip

Massachusetts Institute of Technology researchers are increasing their pursuit of “optics on a chip” work, which could lead to new devices, systems, and applications in computing and telecommunications.

In the January 2007 issue of the journal Nature Photonics, the team reports a new way to integrate photonic circuitry on a silicon chip. Adding the power and speed of light waves to traditional electronics could achieve system performance superior to electronic means alone.

The MIT invention will enable such integrated devices to be mass-manufactured for the first time. And, depending on the growth of the telecom industry, the new devices could be in demand within five years, coauthor Erich P. Ippen, the Elihu Thomson professor of electrical engineering and physics, told MIT News.

MALWARE
ProfitBase Deploys Configurable Data Warehouse Software

ProfitBase, a provider of configurable data warehousing, released ProfitBase 2007, its configurable data warehouse software, to the North American market.

ProfitBase 2007 is a configurable data warehousing technology that delivers business analytics, business system connectivity, and a rapid-configuration data warehouse tool that reduces deployment time and empowers information workers with one consolidated view of information.

ProfitBase 2007 has ready-to-use OLAP business cubes for finance and sales and data source connectors for Microsoft Dynamics GP, NAV and AX, Oracle Financials, and others.

WIRELESS
New Mobile Imaging Technology

Scalado AB is touting its new CAPS imaging technology. Two notable features of the Scalado CAPS imaging application include Scalado AutoRama, which enables multimegapixel panorama effects, and Scalado SpeedView, which allows real-time browsing, zooming, and panning of images. Both functions operate on a mobile screen without compromising on speed or image quality.