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Page/s: 8

CEO recounts surveillance solution provider's high points

MultiVision nicks Nic

By Choong Choon Yee

HONGKONG pop star Nicholas Tse could have got away scot-free if his March 23 car crash had not been recorded by a surveillance system designed by MultiVision Intelligent Surveillance.

The 22-year-old singer-actor, who crashed his HK\$2 million (S\$448,000) Ferrari F360 in central Hongkong, was found guilty of conspiring to pervert the course of justice by allowing a chauffeur to take the blame.

MultiVision chief executive Louis Mak, 55, was visibly proud when he told Streets: "Nicholas Tse's car crash was captured by our camera in Hongkong, and that was why the police could see the driver was actually him.

"That was how the police found out the true story... It also meant that our surveillance system could perform and was not a waste of taxpayers' money."

The US\$3 million (S\$5.2 million) island-wide traffic surveillance system was designed and developed by Hongkong-based MultiVision in 1988.

But their surveillance systems do not just catch errant pop stars. They also recorded the Tiananmen Square student democracy protests on June 4, 1989.

"We had handed over the new surveillance system to the security bureau of Beijing about six months before the protests," Mr Mak said.

During the demonstrations and Chinese government's crackdown, Mr Mak was holed up in his hotel room.

"I was in Beijing on a business trip, and we were advised not to go outside. I could see people running by the hotel."

Afterwards, Mr Mak was allowed into the control room of the security bureau, where he saw a portion of the four hours that was recorded.

Recounting the footage that he saw, he said: "At first, the students did not know they were being recorded. Later they found out and put their clothes over the cameras in the centre of the square. What exactly happened in the centre of Tiananmen Square was not recorded."



Nicholas Tse's car crash was captured by our camera in Hongkong, and that was why the police could see the driver was actually him. That was how the police found out the true story. Otherwise, nobody would have known.'

- MultiVision CEO Louis Mak (left)

But the square is large and MultiVision's outlying cameras were left alone.

"These filmed the army tanks moving, soldiers and trucks gathering. We could also see the students."

Like the millions of people worldwide who felt that the Chinese government's treatment of the students was heavy-handed, Mr Mak too was dismayed by what he saw.

"I was upset because the students were not really doing anything, but they were being moved away from the square by force."

But he was glad about one thing.

"At least, our surveillance system was able to collect such historical evidence."

Installing the US\$1.6 million surveillance system in the square was MultiVision's first major project in China.

Today, MultiVision is a provider of digital video surveillance solutions, whose shares started trading on the main board of the Singapore Exchange last Wednesday.

Net proceeds of \$13.3 million from its initial public offering of 70.1 million shares - 10.5 million for public, 59.6 million for placement - at 23 cents each will be used to fund research and development, and to expand in the region via acquisitions and investments in complementary businesses.

For the four months ended July 31, MultiVision recorded a net profit of HK\$6.56 million, reversing a loss of HK\$1.65 million in the corresponding period a year ago. Turnover shot up more than 10 times, to HK\$25.83 million, compared to HK\$2.44 million previously.

The company, whose biggest markets are China and the US, is looking at more business opportunities post-Sept 11.



Francis Leo