

MEASAT 's HD goals

Most recent news from MEASAT that they will be bringing World Cup football to Asia Pacific follows the satellite operators' continued successful efforts to drive HD in the region. Television Asia Plus talks to Terry Bleakley , Vice President, Commercial Operations, MEASAT Satellite Systems

Having just announced that MEASAT had signed an agreement with GlobeCast Asia to provide transponder capacity for the upcoming FIFA World Cup 2010 in South Africa, Terry Bleakley, MEASAT's vice president, commercial operations said that this is the first time the company has been involved in distributing the FIFA World Cup.

"The MEASAT-3 satellite located at the 91.5°E orbital slot has an excellent footprint and is the ideal platform to distribute content directly from South Africa to the entire Asia Pacific region," he said.

The significance of The World Cup to the television industry, that in 2010 it will be instrumental in launching 3DTV, as in 2006 the tournament was integral to the launch of HDTV.

And HDTV has been an important part of MEASAT's growth strategy in the region, building a significant HD neighbourhood on its 3a satellite, and making MEASAT synonymous with HD.

How is HDTV becoming more accessible to the viewer in terms of availability and affordability?

There is a lot more HD content out there than say 12 months ago.

New channels such as Li TV and The Food Network, which do not have the legacy of a SD installed

base to navigate, have chosen to launch their channels in HD as a differentiator and a key component of their go to market strategy – something we did not see in 2008.

In addition, all of the leading tier one pay-TV networks in Asia, such as National Geographic, Discovery, Fox International Channels, Sony Picture Entertainment, AETN, and HBO, have launched HD channels.

There have also been significant changes in HD technology that are delivering benefits for pay-TV platform operators and increasing HD availability. With the new efficiencies and cost savings of MPEG-4 compression and DVB-S2 modulation, we are seeing more DTH operators expanding the HD bouquet.

Two examples of new HD offerings launched last year are Astro's Beyond service that provides HD content to the Malaysian and Brunei markets, and Sun Direct launched the first HD bouquet for the Indian market.

Other more developed pay-TV markets are offering more variety of HD content due to increased availability. For example, Skylife in Korea now have over 50 HD channels, and they expect this to grow to 70 channels by the end of 2010.

In terms of affordability, there are a number of factors that are improving the affordability of HD content to the subscribers and to the operator.

The cost of HD ready TV sets continues to drop, which is supported by the fact that over 90 percent of TVs sold in Asia over the last 24 months are HD ready.

The cost to deliver the content has dropped with more efficient compression and modulation techniques.

We have noted that HD has seen its biggest growth in high ARPU markets with USD50 to USD70 ARPUs of Japan and Australia

are leading the region in both ARPU and HD roll-out.

However, in price sensitive markets such as India, where volume is used to make up for ARPU shortfalls we may see a new model develop in future. SunDirect is offering a 5 Channel HD package for Rs 100.

How is your business contributing to the growth of HD in the region?

MEASAT has been at the forefront of development of HD in the region. For several



The MEASAT-3 satellite located at the 91.5°E orbit slot has an excellent footprint and is the ideal platform to distribute content directly from South Africa to the entire Asia Pacific region

Terry Bleakley, Vice President, Commercial Operations, MEASAT

years we have actively engaged strategic partners and been a thought leader in developing strategies for HD distribution.

MEASAT has commissioned market analysis of the future of HD in the Asian pay-TV market, and we have actively participated in MEASAT and industry forums to show leadership in the category.

We have developed relationships with play-out and uplink partners in Middle East, Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia to offer content providers different options to get their HD content to the subscriber.

Drawing on our expertise in HD content distribution, MEASAT has developed a unique business model to support the roll out of HD channels in the region.

As a result of the successful HD initiatives, MEASAT is the leading Asian satellite operator for C-Band distribution of HD content. MEASAT 3 and 3a

satellites carry a total of 11 Channels, more than any of satellite operator in the region.

What is HD's importance to growth of your business and TV industry in the region?

HD remains a core focus for MEASAT and is one of the key market segments for the growth of the company. We will continue to lead HD content and distribution services in the region.

I would expect to continue to see strong growth of HD content

in the region, and would expect HD pay-TV channels to become the norm within the next 3-5 years due to a number of factors. There are more HD sets out there with consumers watching HD content on their Blu Ray players now looking for a similar experience from their pay-TV provider. Secondly, there is also more content being produced in HD, generating a larger library of material available for creating compelling HD channels.

In Asia, I feel that we are reaching a tipping point for pay-TV services. Our experience shows that channels that are new to market are frequently launching in HD rather than in an effort to compete with more established competitors.

As a result, a number of the leading pay-TV networks are looking to simultaneously offer both HD and SD content to support their traditional subscriber base while also developing the newer HD subscriber base. TVPlusz