

Star gazing

MEASAT Satellite Systems COO Paul Brown-Kenyon talks to *Ritesh Gupta* about opportunities that new satellites will bring

MEASAT Satellite Systems Sdn Bhd, a regional satellite operator based just outside of Kuala Lumpur, is gearing up for the launch of its third satellite, MEASAT-3. The launch is expected by the end of this year.

The initiative will result in expansion of the reach of the MEASAT network to close to 110 countries, representing more than 70% of the world's population. The company is also working with Orbital on a MEASAT-1R satellite, planned to be launched at the end of 2007.

Currently, the company operates a network of two geostationary communications satellites, MEASAT-1 and MEASAT-2.

Paul Brown-Kenyon, Chief Operating officer, MEASAT Satellite Systems spoke to Television Asia about his vision for the company. Here are the excerpts:

Q: MEASAT Satellite Systems' MEASAT-3 has been allocated a launch slot between 28 Nov 2006 and 26 Jan 2007. What will this new satellite offer?

A: MEASAT-3 will provide an additional 24 C-band and 24 Ku-band transponders at our key 91.5°E orbital location. Via a single high powered C-Band beam, designed as one of the most powerful broadcast beams serving the region, the satellite will provide coverage across the region bounded by Africa and Eastern Europe in the West, through to Japan and Australia in the East. With three high powered Ku-band spot beams, the satellite has also been designed to provide distinctive satellite DTH video and DTH broadband services across Malaysia, Indonesia and the South Asian region.

Q: Considering MEASAT's existing portfolio, how do you think MEASAT is in a position to exploit new opportunities?

A: The launch of the new satellite allows MEASAT to significantly increase the geographical reach of the network. Today, MEASAT serves customers operating across Southeast and Northeast Asia. With the new satellite, we will be able to serve customers across South Asia, the Middle East, Eastern Europe and Eastern Africa. With the satellite designed to support the key broadcast customer segment – whether pay-TV, video distribution or video contribution services – it will significantly strengthen our position across this key segment.

The addition of MEASAT-1R to



MEASAT



Paul Brown-Kenyon

the fleet at the end of 2007, to be collocated with MEASAT-3, will also enable us to provide key customers with in-orbit redundancy, an increasingly important requirement for the region's top broadcasting customers.

Q: How will MEASAT-3 and your new KL Teleport offer C-band broadcasters with video playout and video distribution services across the Asia Pacific region?

A: The completion of the MEASAT Teleport and Broadcast Centre last year enabled MEASAT to start providing broadcasting solutions. We provide some of the services, such as video turnaround or Business Continuity Solutions, directly leveraging the Teleport Facility. In other areas, such as Video playout, we work with a small group of world class media operators, such as Astro and Pacific Century Matrix, to provide the solution.

Being based in the region, we believe we are able to provide a

quality solutions at a cost effective price and which are tailored to the local Asian market. We believe that this is distinctive.

Q: Astro's expansion seems to revolve around MEASAT's plans. It has indicated that it plans to use 30-40 transponders over the next 7-8 years. How has this shaped up?

A: Astro is a very important customer to MEASAT. They are currently using all our Ku-band transponders on MEASAT-1 and have made significant commitments for capacity on the MEASAT-3 satellite. In terms of how many transponders they expect to use, moving forward we are unable to comment directly. But we can say that they have already committed to significant growth on MEASAT-3 over the next six years.

In addition to Astro, we also support PT Direct Vision (PTDV) in Indonesia. While they are currently leveraging Ku-band capacity on the MEASAT-2 satellite, we expect them to migrate this service to the MEASAT-3 satellite. We also see them as a core customer on this satellite moving forward.

Q: In terms of the Ku-band, how is MEASAT-3 going to enable clients to benefit?

A: MEASAT-3 supports three Ku-Band beams covering Malaysia, Indonesia and South Asia. Designed to support DTH applications across countries with high rain fade, they are very high powered beams (for Malaysia and Indonesia, for example, the beams provide over 100% more power than competing systems). The availability of this capacity in these markets will provide a spur to the development of DTH and

broadband applications.

Q: Considering Asia's diversity, and with more local programming in Asia, how do you think separate DTH services are being serviced for each country?

A: Most DTH operators in Asia today are national systems. This is due to a combination of regulatory constraints on pay-TV operations, diversity in terms of culture and language across countries, and technical constraints with Ku-band DTH technology. Even in markets like Malaysia and Indonesia, which share many common connections, you see the development of separate systems in each of the markets.

We expect to see most pay-TV operators continuing to focus on individual markets, and one can expect successful operators sharing their knowledge across markets. I think PTDV is a key example of this with Astro, the most successful pay TV operator in Southeast Asia, sharing their operating knowledge and content with local Indonesian customers to develop a strong Indonesian DTH operator.

Q: How do you think HDTV is driving demand for capacity?

A: I think HD is happening and will drive demand for capacity. I think, however, that it will take a little longer than some commentators are saying. Events such as the Beijing Olympics in 2008 are very important event for its development and will be a key catalyst. I think the speed of development will vary significantly across the region with the higher per capita markets, such as Japan, Hong Kong and Singapore, clearly leading the development. **tva**