

*The maritime industry has also enjoyed Thuraya's technological advances with ThurayaMarine.*

## Turning to Asia

Thuraya, the Abu Dhabi-based operator has branched out into the Asia-Pacific and is doing very good business in the region. With a re-branding exercise planned for October, Helen Jameson spoke to Yousuf Al Sayed, CEO of Thuraya about what it is like to do business in the Asia-Pacific.

**Question: I would firstly like to congratulate you on the launch of Thuraya 3. How is the satellite performing for you?**

**Yousuf Al Sayed:** Thank you. Last week we had an internal meeting with the team as well as the supplier and everything is perfect.

**Question: This time last year, when we spoke, you were planning an aggressive marketing campaign in Asia. How are your commercial operations going in the Asia-Pacific region?**

**Yousuf Al Sayed:** Well we are taking them in order of priority. We are looking at countries like Australia and China and Indonesia as well, the larger populated countries as well as the lesser populated ones. We are also

looking at the maritime business. In the maritime business, we have introduced a maritime terminal. It's a special terminal. It's not like the other existing maritime terminals. It extends the land experience into maritime. I will not say it is like 3G but the maritime sector must wait just like the people on land had to wait for the technology to advance.

They have all the benefits of services such as missed calls, MMS, browsing the Net, so they will have that feeling of being on land. The terminal is small and suitable for smaller to medium-sized boats. With the launch of Thuraya-3 we are launching the Thuraya IP terminal which is a broadband data terminal with streaming capability as well. Initially this is for land use but it would

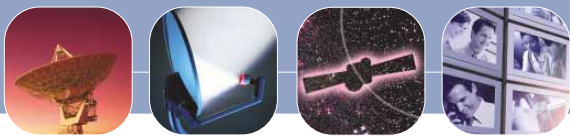
also be suitable for use in the maritime environment with a special tracking antenna that our partners are developing.

**Question: Do you have any idea when that will be launched?**

**Yousuf Al Sayed:** The launch has been delayed. It was supposed to be launched in January but hopefully very soon. Our technical people are in the process of making sure that everything is perfect before launch.

**Question: Has demand for Thuraya Marine been high in the Asia-Pacific region?**

**Yousuf Al Sayed:** We were not making a lot of units at the beginning but now we don't have many of them left and we have had to



start on new orders now so that is very good news. There is a lot of demand coming from different parts of Asia. We even see demand for services provided in the Thuraya-2 coverage area in the Asian region. It's very positive.

**Question: Have there been any particular challenges in setting up commercial operations in the Asia-Pacific?**

**Yousuf Al Sayed:** Yes. It is different. The regulatory environment is very different here. It's different but it is possible. You have to be patient to have a presence here. The second thing is obviously that there were operators here before us. There is competition but we have a different market approach and a different business model that we are extending from our original coverage area and we think it is very suitable for the Asia-Pacific as well. Currently we have activity in Australia. We have a licence there and everything is going fine. I am about to go to China to see how we can approach that market.

**Question: What were the reasons behind your re-branding set for October?**

**Yousuf Al Sayed:** The current brand and brand value has played its part. Now we are in a transitional phase. The brand was designed for the Thuraya-2 coverage area and has run for ten years now and now we are expanding into a new region and we are producing new products and we have new requirement and a new strategy. The re-branding will reflect energy and innovation and Thuraya's new way of thinking. We are constantly bringing in new products and services for mobile satellite and our branding should illustrate that.

**Question: In terms of research and development, is there anything in particular that Thuraya is working on at the moment?**

**Yousuf Al Sayed:** You will always find some sort of development at Thuraya – sometimes at a higher level, sometimes at a lower level. We have not yet started any next-generation development. But I do anticipate that in around six months we will start work on understanding the concept of the next generation satellites.

**Question: Finally, can I ask you about the next 6-12 months? What will be happening at Thuraya?**

**Yousuf Al Sayed:** Overall, our core business is voice. Wherever there is mobility we are very much into voice communications. We are also concerned with portability and our Thuraya IP terminal is a great example of this. You can move the terminal around but when you want to use it you sit down and deploy it. We will be concentrating very much on distributing Thuraya IP. The media are particularly interested in this product be-

**Thuraya signs ten agreements for maritime distribution**

Demand for Thuraya's recently launched ThurayaMarine solution has been so overwhelming that the Company has signed up ten distribution agreements for this competitive product. This momentum is an indication for the need for an affordable, reliable maritime communication solution that caters to the needs of the regional maritime industry.

ThurayaMarine is a cost effective and user friendly telecom solution purposely designed for small and medium sized sea vessels. With a compact-size terminal, the service supports voice, data, fax, GPS and GmPRS. The omni-directional antenna that comes with the terminal ensures a quality, uninterrupted service at sea.

The ten agreements signed recently were with Fort Info Technology, GPTC, IEC, Intermatica, Moodotel, Nera Telecommunications, Satcom, Satlink, WorldCom Japan Traders and Xtralink. The SPs will be marketing and promoting ThurayaMarine service throughout Thuraya's extensive coverage area. These Service Providers have established expertise and channels for retailing various types of satellite and maritime telecom products.

"We are thrilled with this rapid interest in ThurayaMarine across many markets. It is clearly a promising sign for the success of this product in a large, lucrative industry such as the maritime communications," said Thuraya's CEO Mr. Yousuf Al Sayed.

He also added that the growing strong distribution base being built for the ThurayaMarine service will facilitate a faster access and roll-out to customers.

The new service, which comes with a wireless phone allowing mobility and flexibility onboard ships, is an attractive option for fishing boats, leisure yachts and several vehicle types used in the marine transport industry.

Thuraya covers the Arabian Gulf, Red Sea, Mediterranean, Arabian Sea, North Sea, Baltic Sea, substantial parts of the Atlantic and Indian Oceans and international waters in most of the Asia-Pacific.

cause of its streaming capabilities – great for SNG and live transmission purposes. It is only a small terminal so it is very easy to carry with you.

It is very convenient to take on aircraft for example. That will be our driver for data business. We will also be concentrating on the vertical markets such as corporates and governments as well as the maritime com-

munications market. The maritime market will also be key for us.

We are looking at a combination of these three areas, voice, data and maritime. All will be important. We will also be focusing on value added services to provide to our customers such as fleet management and tracking. They will be our areas of focus in the coming year. ■



*ThurayaDSL—which provides Internet connectivity through a small and mobile terminal the size of a notebook.*