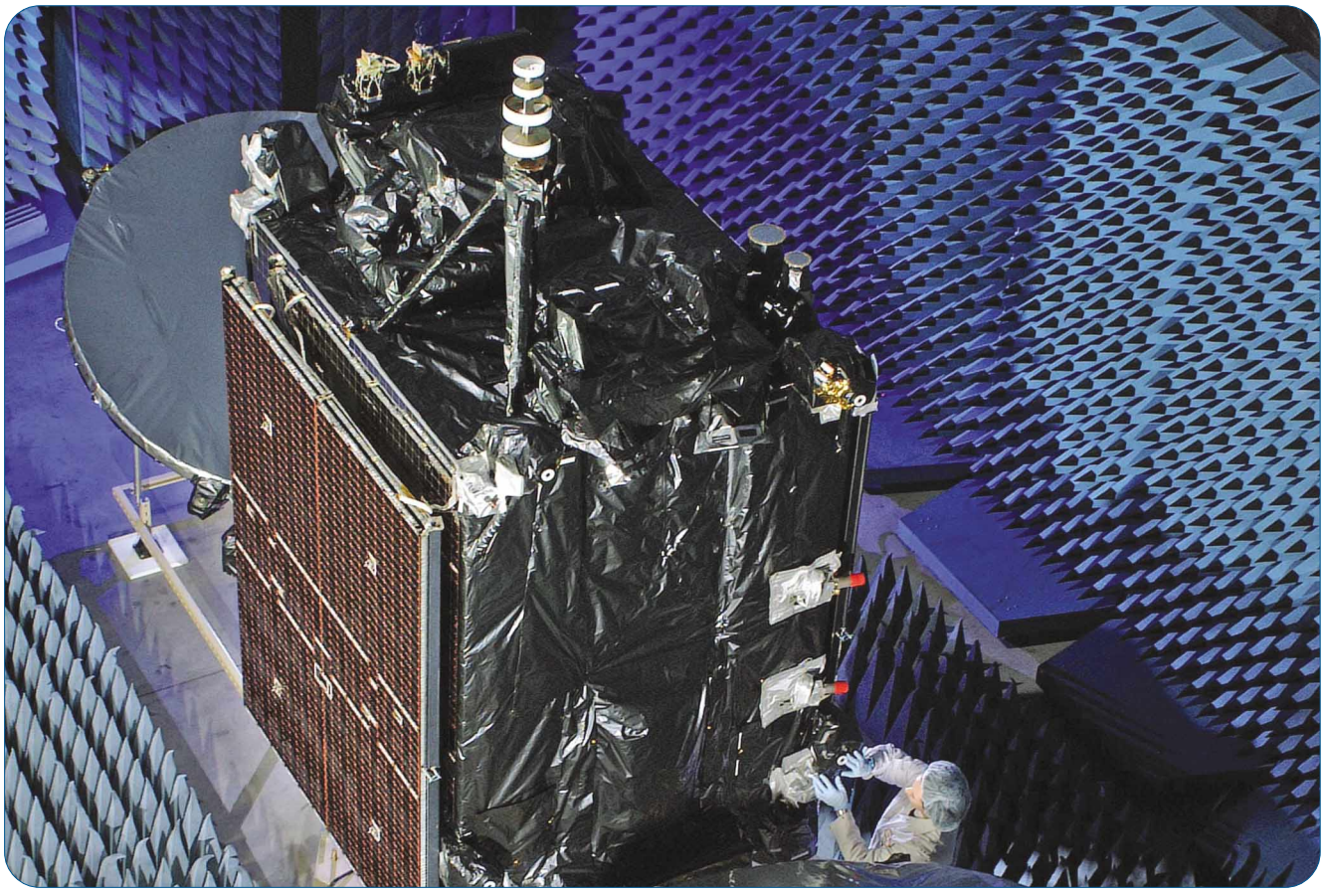

TELKOM 2 satellite was built by Orbital Sciences Corporation.

A positive future

ASSI, the Indonesian Satellite Association, has seen its country go through a great deal since the Asian tsunami in 2004. However, the region is now looking forward and satellite communications are featuring more and more in day-to-day life. Helen Jameson speaks to Tonda Priyanto, Chairman of ASSI about the future of Indonesia and the surrounding region.

Question: Many thanks for your time. As the regional satellite association in Indonesia, can you tell us what are the latest trends that you see happening in the satellite industry in your region?

Tonda Priyanto: On behalf of the Indonesian Satellite Association, I would to thank you and appreciate that Satellite Evolution Asia is hosting this discussion, focusing on the satellite issue in Indonesia as well as the Asia-Pacific.

For the last decade I have seen a good steady and sustainable satellite market growth in the Asia-Pacific region in line with the growth of the economic and social development in the region. Though terrestrial networks, such as optical fibre, mobile cellular and broadband wireless, are increasing exponentially, still many parts of this region are untouched by those networks. Countries like China, Indonesia and India still have many rural or remote areas where people who live there have no means of access to the outside world.

However satellite solutions are not the monopoly of the rural area. They are also a favoured solution for the urban area and developed countries like Japan and South Korea, though its mission objectives are totally different. Satellite HDTV, Satellite DMB, IP VSAT and many others are truly the new killer satellite applications designed to meet the non-rural requirements.

Other than satellite communication applications, I also see that there is a rise for non- satellite communication applications in this region. Good progress of the space industry in China, India, Japan and South Korea is evident. In Indonesia we have also developed a remote sensing LEO satellite by LAPAN, and they are now developing a more advanced type of satellite. This progress is also reflected in the launch industry that is already advancing in China, India and Japan. Indonesia is also developing such capability through a co-operation with a Russian company.

In business, I also witness such a strong growth of all satellite operators and this good business environment encourages new countries to join the space community, like VietNam.

In conclusion, though, there is an indi-

cation of a good steady and sustainable growth in the economy of the region that will, in return, help the growth of the satellite industry in general. For Indonesia, we are very optimistic about this as long as we do not suffer another crisis situation as we did in 1997.

Question: Is the use of satellite communications becoming more popular and widespread?
Tonda Priyanto: In general satellite networks are a "back room" business. It is very different from mobile cellular or Internet that can be popularised through advertisements and marketing, for example. However it plays a significant role in making other networks fully functional in areas where terrestrial networks are having difficulties in performing.

This significant role was evident during the disaster recovery mission, like the Tsunami in Aceh or earthquake in some parts of Indonesia, as well in other Asia-Pacific countries. Through those events we see satellite communications gaining popularity within the nation. One example is the BYRU mobile satellite services provided by ACeS.

The other significant impact we see is greater government awareness on the importance of satellite infrastructure in supporting the country. Lately, for example, the Indonesian government have endorsed and encouraged us to develop the Indonesian satellite development roadmap that focuses on multiple issues such as R&D, human resources, industry and so on.

Question: What was ASSI's role in the aftermath of the tsunami tragedy and how important were satellite communications to the recovery effort?
Tonda Priyanto: ASSI was not directly involved in the recovery effort, however, its members, such as TELKOM, PSN, MCI and INDOSAT built the disaster communication recovery system using VSAT and mobile communications. They also provided a real-time report to the world on what was happening here so that information could disseminated across the world in order to appeal for donations. Having satellite communications, an area could communicate with the outside world in a day. After this disaster, satellite in Indonesia is gaining more attention from government and business as it can be used as a backbone, backup and disaster recovery device.

Question: What does ASSI feel are that principal challenges facing the Indonesian satellite industry?
Tonda Priyanto: Indonesia was the leader among the developing countries in the 1970s as it was the first country to operate and use domestic satellite networks. Indonesia has numerous indigenous satellite engineers and manufacturers that form a strong foundation in Indonesia are ready to design and manufacture satellite. Indonesia is also the only country in ASPAC who have more than one satellite operator comparable only to US, Europe, India, China and Japan.

However our challenge is also enormous particularly after the 1997 crisis. In my view, Indonesian capability in this sector has been systematically scrapped through issues such as economic reformation where it is strongly indicated that some developed countries do not want to see the extent of Indonesia's capability. The economic reform is pragmatist - it does not look into the future investment but rather on the economic recovery so long term and strategic programmes are shifted to the lowest priority, including the space industry. However, as Indonesia has suffered several disasters now, satellite has regained the country's attention again.

Question: What programmes are ASSI involved with at present?
Tonda Priyanto: Now, ASSI is heavily promoting the importance of satellite for Indonesia not only for communication (fixed, mobile and broadcast) but also for EESS (Earth Exploration Satellite Services) such as remote sensing, weather satellite surveillance and RNSS (Radio Navigation Satellite Services) such as Maritime and aeronautical applications. In addition, ASSI is also involved in the progress of regulation for satellite development and business platforms.

Please note that ASSI is not involved in the business side directly, but it is encouraging a business platform in Indonesia for the benefit of ASSI's stakeholders.

Question: What effect has the BYRU satellite GSM system had on communications in Indonesia? Has it been popular?
Tonda Priyanto: BYRU is popular in Indonesia, it could fill the gap for areas that are not covered by terrestrial GSM. As Indonesia is huge and consists of 17,000 islands (where 6,000 are inhabited), BYRU is very popular especially for rural and also maritime applications.

Question: Does Indonesia have any further plans to launch more satellites?
Tonda Priyanto: The operators in Indonesia understand that it is a very big country and that satellite communication is a must. Therefore, Indonesian operators are now planning to launch more satellites. This commitment has been demonstrated by Indosat who have signed a contract for PALAPA D, and Indostar, who are also planning to launch the replacement of Indostar-1. It is also rumoured that TELKOM is planning to launch its TELKOM-3 satellite. I believe PSN also would like to launch a satellite in the near future.

Question: What are ASSI's principal objectives as we move into 2008?
Tonda Priyanto: ASSI is trying to encourage and promote a better platform for satellite business in Indonesia, and it is also trying encourage the DTH business as it is the future of satellite applications. However, the penetration here is still considered to be low.

In other areas, ASSI is also promoting the use of satellite for humanity and exploring our resources. ■

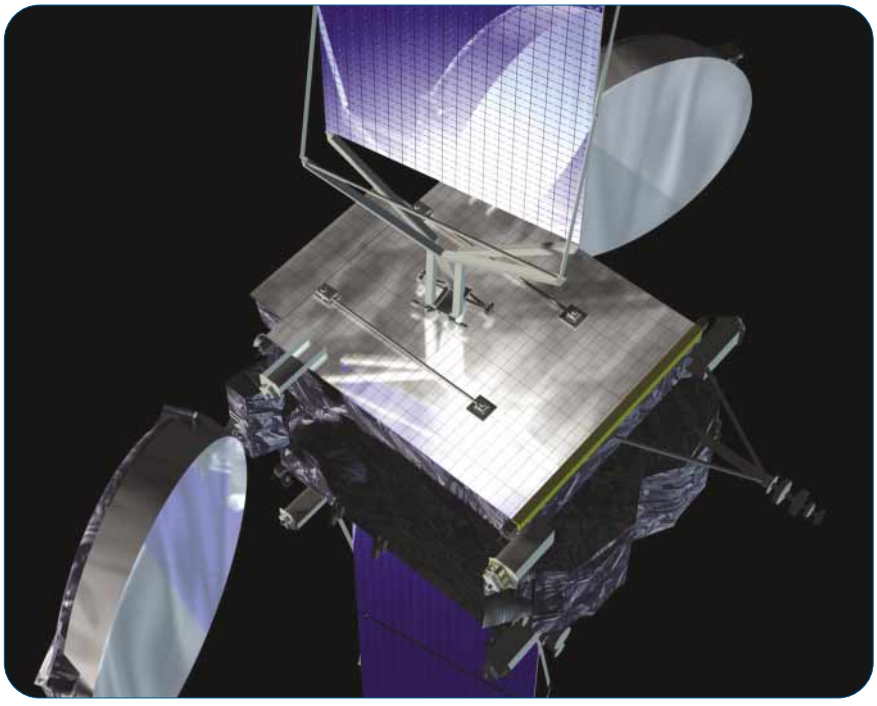

Photo courtesy of Orbital Sciences Corporation.