

All photos courtesy of THAICOM.

A company with vision

Today, THAICOM continues to thrive and innovate providing communications to those even in the most remote areas. Helen Jameson speaks to Patompob Suwansiri, Head of Marketing for THAICOM.

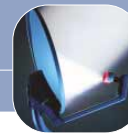


THAICOM PLC (formerly Shin Satellite) was founded in 1991 and is a premier satellite and telecommunications operator with customers throughout Asia, Africa, Europe and Australia. The company has launched five THAICOM satellites into geostationary orbit. THAICOM was the first company in the region to offer Ku-band digital Direct-to-Home broadcasting as well as the world's first operator to employ MPEG-2/DVB compression, since 1994. THAICOM created IPSTAR, the world's first broadband satellite to fully support telecommunications via IP. Its technology has enabled THAICOM to increase the capacity for efficient use of bandwidth, therefore lowering service costs to a lower level than that of other satellites as well as allowing rapid rollout of a two-way high-speed broadband satellite system.

Question: Many thanks for your time. THAICOM PLC had a very successful 2007 and announced good financial results. What do you attribute this success to?

Patompob Suwansiri: In 2007, apart from the continued growth in our customer base in our conventional THAICOM business, we have also expanded our IPSTAR broadband satellite services and have done particularly well in markets such as Thailand, Australia and New Zealand.

Question: THAICOM PLC has now increased its number of gateways to ten, and the company has ambitions to open four further gateways in Malaysia, the Philippines, Korea and Indonesia. This is obviously significant. Can you please tell



us about your expansion plans?

Patompob Suwansiri: IPSTAR covers 14 countries in Asia-Pacific using a total of 18 gateways.

Our plan is to expand to all 14 countries within 2008/2009 timeframe. As of now, we have seven countries operational and Malaysia, the Philippines, Korea and Indonesia will soon be operational within Q2 to early Q3 of this year.

Question: The IPSTAR terminal has proved to be incredibly popular. Congratulations on the delivery of the 100,000th terminal. Why has it been so popular and what is next for the IPSTAR terminal?

Patompob Suwansiri: We believe that the IPSTAR ground system, including the User Terminal, is one of the most cost effective and efficient systems out in the market. This, combined with our multi-spot beam IPSTAR satellite, provides a very powerful business model in Asia-Pacific that enables a very attractive end-user price point. For example, our service is offered in Australia for only AUD 29.95/month (US\$27) with the Broadband Connect program.

Question: What would you say are the major trends and developments within the satellite industry in the Asia-Pacific region? What do you expect to be big news this year and why?

Patompob Suwansiri: We believe that satellite broadband is the significant growth engine for the satellite industry in the future, especially in developing nations where the terrestrial infrastructure is not adequate. Also, HDTV will also play a significant role in Asia-Pacific in the future.

Question: THAICOM PLC has recently introduced WiWorld to the automobile market. This is a real luxury product. Do you expect this particular product to be successful in the Southeast Asian region and to meet your target sales of 1,500 units by the end of 2008?

Patompob Suwansiri: WiWorld is an innovative and niche product that we offer to the consumers in the Thai market. It is a portable one-way antenna that can receive DTH signals "on the move". As you may be aware, traffic is a big issue in a large city like Bangkok and this product caters to affluent individuals and tour bus operators that want clear digital TV entertainment on the move.

Question: Do you expect the demand for satellite services in general to grow in the Asian region? How is the market performing, in your opinion?

Patompob Suwansiri: For conventional broadcasting satellite industry, we still see a continued demand for transponder services, especially in the video distribution and DTH areas. Of course, we see the large opportunities in the broadband satellite sector where there is still a lot of pent-up demand around the region.

Question: Of the markets that THAICOM PLC currently serves all are obviously important, but which markets show most promise?

Patompob Suwansiri: Our focus in the broadcasting sector is the Indochina and Indian subcontinent markets. As for the IPSTAR broadband market, of course, India and China are our biggest markets and ones that have the greatest opportunities for growth.

Question: What is next for THAICOM PLC? How are you going to stay ahead of the satellite market? There are many new and innovative products being developed. In terms of research and development, what will THAICOM PLC be focusing on?

Patompob Suwansiri: Last year, we developed a very low cost DTH set top box and dish set that retails for only around US\$60. We have rolled out over 150,000 boxes within nine months already in Thailand. We also expand the DTV service to our neighbouring countries such as in Cambodia through our subsidiary, Cambodian DTV Network Co., Ltd. For the IPSTAR technology, we will continue to optimise the efficiency of the system. ■



THAICOM teleport and DTH centre.