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Singapore

IDA issues RFP for next gen net operating company

Singapore's Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore (IDA) has issued its RFP for an operating company (OpCo) to design, build and operate the active infrastructure of Singapore's next generation national broadband network (Next Gen NBN).

The Next Gen NBN will offer pervasive, competitively priced ultra-high speed broadband connectivity to business users at the workplace, as well as to Singaporeans at home, schools and learning institutions, and other premises.

It is expected to be available nationwide by 2015, although consumers should be able to gain access to a range of next gen services such as high-definition video conferencing, telemedicine, grid computing-on-demand, security and immersive learning applications from about 2010.

According to IDA, "OpCo will play a pivotal role in bringing about a competitive and vibrant broadband market for Singapore, through providing retail service providers (RSPs) with open access to the Next Gen NBN's active infrastructure. For RSPs to have effective open access to OpCo's active infrastructure, the RFP will require OpCo to be operationally separated from other operators. OpCo will also be subject to price control and universal service obligations."

The government is prepared to catalyse private sector investment, by providing a grant of up to \$250 million to the winning bid, in addition to the grant of up to \$750 million for the next gen NBN NetCo, the RF for which was issued in December 2007.

The Next Gen NBN will comprise three key conceptual industry layers: the network company (NetCo) will be responsible for the design, build and operation of the passive infrastructure layer; leveraging NetCo's passive infrastructure will be operating companies that are responsible for the design, build and operation of the active infrastructure to provide wholesale broadband connectivity to other operating companies and downstream operators, in particular, RSPs. These RSPs will in turn compete to provide innovative services to end-users.

OpCo will be required to be operationally separated from downstream RSPs, in line with the industry structure envisaged for the Open Access Next Gen NBN. Compared to the structural separation imposed on NetCo, operational separation is a less stringent form of separation as OpCo will be allowed to retain full shareholding ownership of its downstream operating units, such as RSPs.

However OpCo will be required to treat all downstream units equally, and on a non-discriminatory basis. It will have to operate on a standalone basis separate from its affiliated downstream operating units and be subject to various obligations, including being established as a separate legal entity and maintaining separate board, management and staff.

It must offer fair and non-discriminatory wholesale broadband services to other operating companies and downstream operators such as RSPs through an interconnection offer (ICO). The prices and terms and conditions of these wholesale offerings will be regulated by IDA.

OpCo will be required to complement a similar obligation on the NetCo which will be obliged to meet all reasonable requests by any operating company or downstream RSP for access to a basic set of wholesale services offered under its ICO.

IDA conducted a pre-qualification exercise on 3 March 2008 which resulted in 11 companies being pre-qualified to submit bids for the OpCo RFP. However, interested parties that did not participate in the pre-qualification exercise can still submit applications to qualify as consortium leads, no later than 21 April 2008.

IDA expects to determine the successful bid for OpCo in the first quarter of 2009. The NetCo RFP will close on 5 May 2008 and the successful bid is expected to be determined by the third quarter of 2008.

China

Intel to invest \$US500m in Chinese companies

Intel Capital, Intel's global investment arm, has announced its second China investment fund, the \$US500m Intel Capital China Technology Fund II.

The new fund is more than double the size of Intel's initial China fund and will invest in wireless broadband, technology, media, telecommunications and 'clean tech' that complement Intel's corporate initiatives and helps expand technology market segments in China.

"The establishment of our China Technology Fund II is the ideal way to celebrate 10 years of Intel Capital activity in China's vibrant economy," said Arvind Sodhani, president of Intel Capital. "Since 1998, Intel Capital has invested in more than 70 companies across China and Hong Kong. We aim to foster innovation and local entrepreneurship, while enriching the technical capabilities and global competitiveness of technology companies in the region."

Cadol Cheung, managing director, Intel Capital Asia Pacific, said: "Intel Capital expects to further increase our investment in China by pursuing business opportunities and participating in larger deals with an eye on leading rounds. As a stage-agnostic global technology investor, Intel Capital invests consistently across all economic landscapes and has a unique advantage in providing value-added benefits."

Intel Capital's first \$US200 million Intel Capital China Technology Fund has been fully invested in local Chinese companies, and Intel has announced the funds' two final investments: Holdfast Online Technology which provides a platform to host third-party operator LAN-based or console games so gamers can play against each other in a wide area network; and Newauto Video Technology which manufactures and sells video equipment, network solutions and system integrations for TV stations across China. It also provides digital content editing and sports program live-broadcasting services and is a service provider for the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

The fund's other investments include: Neusoft Group, Supcon Group, A8 Music, Chinacache International, Chipsbank Microelectronics, DAC, HiSoft Technology International, Kingsoft, Legend Silicon, Montage Technology, and Palm Commerce.

Since 1991 Intel Capital has invested more than \$US7.5 billion in approximately 1,000 companies in 45 countries. In that timeframe, 168 portfolio companies have gone public on various exchanges around the world and 212 have been acquired or participated in a merger. In 2007, Intel Capital invested about \$US639 million in 166 deals with approximately 37 percent of funds invested outside the United States.

Nova granted one of first IP-VPN licences

Nova has granted one of the first IP-VPN service license by the Ministry of Information Industry (MII).

Prior to the issue of these licences, only China's six telecoms carrier were able to offer IP-VPN services. Nova was also one of the first valued-added service providers in China to be granted ISP/ICP/SP licenses. It won the Level 1 National System Integration Qualification issued by the Ministry of Information Industry in 2006 and

was ranked among the top 100 enterprises in the software industry for four consecutive years from 2004-2007.

The company says it will continue to cooperate with partners to develop the IP-VPN market and to improve service capabilities to provide comprehensive and high-quality IP communications services to customers.

Nova, founded in 1996 is a network service and solutions provider. It builds network platforms and application systems for customers in telecommunications, manufacturing, finance, government and education and has implemented a number of large-scale system integration projects all over China.

It is headquartered in Shenzhen and has more than 20 branch offices across the country. It employs 300 people including more than 100 technical and service personnel, over 40 professional engineers, 12 CCIE, over 30 CCNP/CCDP/CCSP with extensive experience.

Japan

iPass adds access from livedoor's Tokyo hotspots

Global roaming Internet access provider, iPass, has added the municipal wireless network encircled by Tokyo's Yamanote Line to its global network as part of a roaming agreement with Tokyo-based, livedoor Co.

The network has more than 2,000 access points over an area of 60 square kilometres. The Yamanote Line is Tokyo's busiest and most important commuter line, connecting most of Tokyo's major stations and urban centres including the Ginza area, Shibuya, Shinjuku and Ikebukuro. It carries more than 3.6 million commuters per day.

As part of the integration process, livedoor's wireless mesh network has been certified through the iPass Enterprise Ready program. According to iPass, "this helps ensure that the network will deliver the high quality of service that iPass' business customers demand by testing the network for speed and reliability. It also ensures interoperability with corporate security tools, such as virtual private networks, personal firewalls and anti-virus software."

From NTT, the mobile smellphone

Japanese telco NTT Communications is expanding its 'downloadable' fragrance service to support delivery via mobile phones and is looking for applications developers that want to incorporate the technology in, amongst other things, videogames.

Since mid 2005 NTT has offered a device that is loaded with a range of substances each with a distinct aroma. It connects over NTT's fixed network and under instructions from the network releases various combinations of these substances to create different aromas.

According to NTT Com, this device is now used by companies and individuals to enhance indoor environments with pleasing fragrances. Now, NTT is trailing a new version "offers the convenience of using mobile communication to download 'Fragrance Playlists', or files of recipes for specific fragrances together with visual (GIF animation) and audio (MIDI) content."

The Fragrance Playlists are downloaded from an i-mode mobile content website of sister company NTT DoCoMo. Using the phone's infrared port, the fragrance data is then transferred to a device that has been loaded with a cartridge of essences, or base fragrances. This device, described as a smaller, lighter and more stylish version of the previous fixed line model, then "mixes the specific fragrances and emits them as the user enjoys the audiovisual content played back on their phone."

NTT Com is also planning to trial a 'Service Gateway: an Internet connected unit which will enable the fragrance emitting device to be controlled remotely from a mobile phone. NTT Com suggests "commands could be sent to the gateway to instruct the fragrance device to begin operating just before the user arrives home."

It's also looking for companies that want to develop content for the service such as ringtones, music or horoscopes combined with fragrances and specific applications for various markets such as the home, automotive, consumer electronics or videogame markets.

Australia

Pipe teams with Kordia for new Aus-NZ sub cable

Only weeks after committing to build PPC-1, its planned submarine cable link from Sydney to Guam Pipe Networks (ASX: PWK) has announced preliminary plans for a second cable connecting Australia to New Zealand to be built in conjunction with New Zealand communications and broadcast networks provider, the government owned Kordia Group.

Pipe Networks' subsidiary, Pipe International, and Kordia have signed an MoU to collaborate on a project for a new, private fibre optic cable that will link Australia and New Zealand. "This announcement is a shot in the arm for telecommunications in New Zealand and I am delighted to be working with Kordia to resolve the chronic bandwidth issues facing all New Zealanders," Pipe Networks managing director Bevan Slattery said.

The project at this stage is somewhat tentative. According to Pipe, "the MoU is the first major milestone towards the commencement of construction of PPC-2. Once both companies have confirmed the commercial and practical feasibility, Pipe Networks and Kordia would together oversee the financing, construction, operation and maintenance of the cable system."

Kordia is the name given in late 2006 to the former THL Group which comprised Broadcast Communications Ltd (New Zealand), THL Australia and AAP Communications Services (Australia). The company operates and maintains a network of broadcasting and telecommunications transmission infrastructure across New Zealand and Australia and provides other broadcast telecommunications and converged services throughout the region. It was the transmission arm of Television New Zealand until set up as a State Owned Enterprise with an independent board in 2003.

According to Slattery, "Much like Australia, New Zealand suffers from a severe lack of competition when it comes to international bandwidth and the price of bandwidth reflects that. During the planning stage of our Sydney to Guam cable (PPC-1), Pipe International had always intended to assist in the development of PPC-2 a new competitive submarine cable connecting New Zealand to Australia and beyond."

PPC-1 designed with PPC-2 in mind

Pipe says that the Sydney landing station for PPC-1 was designed to co-locate the PPC-2 system and that the PPC-1 cable system has two additional pairs of fibre installed to a branching unit in the waters 120km east of Sydney.

According to Slattery: "this investment in the additional pairs of fibre will allow any new New Zealand to Australia cable to simply interconnect to PPC-1 in the waters off Sydney and directly connect to those spare pairs which will already be connected to our landing station in Sydney. As a result this negates many of the costs, timing and permitting issues associated with landing PPC-2 into Australia."

Pipe says that "to achieve its interest in PPC-2," Pipe International will contribute landing station space in Australia, the allocated two pairs of fibre on the Sydney section on PPC-1 and initially 240Gbps of onward capacity on PPC-1.

No doubt in anticipation of new competition, Southern Cross Cable, was talking up its upgrade plans just a week earlier with sales marketing director Ross Pfeffer saying: "Southern Cross upgrades enable us to support high speed broadband through greatly expanding supply and lowering prices both in Australia and New Zealand. Southern Cross will continue to be very successful in the increasingly competitive Australian capacity market and we recognize the need to support the New Zealand capacity market where we are the only significant supplier by continuing to price capacity from both Australia and New Zealand on exactly the same basis."

New Zealand

NZ Institute releases FTTP blueprint

The New Zealand Institute has called for the creation of a monopoly FTTP network company with regulated access into which Telecom NZ's access network assets would be absorbed and for FTTP to be deployed to 75 percent of the population within 10 years.

The Zealand Institute says the project must commence as a matter of urgency and it claims to identified national economic benefits from broadband in the range of \$NZ2.7-4.4 billion year with further upside potential possible.

The recommendations have been made in *Delivering On The Broadband Aspiration: A Recommended Pathway To Fibre For New Zealand*, the fourth and final publication in the Institute's broadband project.

The Institute says that capturing many of the economic benefit it has identified depends on high speed access, "so New Zealand's policy focus should shift from encouraging penetration to increasing the speed of the network. This means investing in a fibre network...There is a significant cost to waiting. The longer that New Zealand waits, the more economic value it will forego and so New Zealand should approach the investment in fibre with urgency."

A rollout to 75 percent of the population would reach towns with populations greater than about 20,000, and backhaul and overseas links would need upgrading to meet the demands imposed by the high speed access network.

The proposal has received a cautious welcome from InternetNZ. Executive director Keith Davidson, said: "Whether establishing a monopoly investor in the form of FibreCo is the best method remains to be seen. [However] the proposal provides a useful straw man model for debate, given the growing focus on options for open access to dark-fibre infrastructure. Despite the significant reforms to the regulatory framework applying to telecommunications which the government has made, and Telecom's cabinetisation plans, New Zealand remains an international laggard in respect of broadband. The current reforms and rollout will stop us falling even further behind. [But] further action is required if New Zealand's Digital Strategy desire of being in the top half of the OECD for broadband is to be realised."

InternetNZ says it is still considering the model and will be seeking more detail from the New Zealand Institute.

TUANZ aims match NZI's

TUANZ has not commented specifically on the NZ Institute report but last month issued its own Manifesto for the 2008 election saying that replacing 20th century copper wires with 21st century fibre-optic cable, right to the customer's premise should be recognised as a national strategic economic priority.

In the manifesto, TUANZ said: "Intergenerational fibre-optic investment should be shared among central government, local government and the private sector, with recognition that tomorrow's telecommunications investors may be a broader and very different group to yesterday's. Local government should be given a specific mandate to ensure the migration from copper to fibre in its region, along with the tools to make this occur.

"Fibre to the customer's premises, based on dynamic multi-vendor open access networks, should be adopted as a national economic development goal. There should be a time frame of no more than six to eight years for completion. Fibre must go to every home, business, farm and marae [a place sacred to Maori that serves both religious and social purposes]. Private sector investment should be stimulated, working with local government, central government, utility companies and end-users through a co-ordinated action plan.

"The state sector, owned by all New Zealanders, should be leveraged deliberately through demand aggregation programmes as a tool to stimulate investment in open access infrastructure. Creative options for achieving fibre-optic access to the nation's farms should be investigated by a small, dedicated task force."

New funding and regulatory model needed

The Institute claims that Telecom New Zealand has little incentive to invest and calls for the creation of "a new funding and regulatory model...to overcome the issues identified and deliver on the broadband aspiration."

The proposed monopoly operator, dubbed FibreCo, would be "structured to provide commercially attractive returns for private shareholders, with the government providing funding if needed." It should seek to attract investors "comfortable with the risk, return, and time horizon properties of passive fibre infrastructure and the sequencing of network rollout should be for higher return areas to be served first, with early investors getting a right of first refusal on further capital rounds."

The Institute says there would be important roles in FibreCo for key stakeholders including telcos, utilities, central and local government and private investors. "Some parties contribute funding, others provide assets or expertise (eg access to ducting) and others facilitate investment. Owners of existing (copper and fibre) networks can sell these assets to FibreCo on a commercial basis."

Cost estimates encouraging

The Institute has estimated the cost of reaching this 75 percent of premises at \$NZ6 billion: \$NZ4b for passive components and \$2b for active components. This is based on 25,000 kms of fibre duct - 50 percent new and 50 percent existing - at an average cost of \$NZ150,000 per km.

Assuming revenues per premise passed averaging \$NZ400 per year and a 67 percent take up rate at revenue per premise served of t \$NZ50 per month the Institute believes the network will be commercial viable for all premises costing less than \$NZ3000 to connect. "The first 200,000 to 300,000 premises would be fully commercially viable. We estimate that the remainder would require a total of \$NZ1 billion in government funding over 10 years."

It notes that Government currently spends over \$NZ200m a year on communications across multiple suppliers and suggests that, aggregating this spend and committing it to service providers operating on the FibreCo network, the government could play an important role as an anchor tenant and improve the penetration rates of FibreCo.

Full structural separation of TNZ needed

The Institute sees the first step in achieving its goal as being to continue the operational separation of Telecom to full structural separation and for FibreCo to then

acquire Telecom NZ's access network assets at an agreed price. It believes that this full structural separation could be achieved by the end of 2009 after the formation of FibreCo this year with a commitment of government funding and the creation of the appropriate regulatory framework in preparation for FibreCo to commence network rollout in late 2009 or early 2010.

Pakistan

China Mobile's big plans for Paktel

China Mobile has rebranded its subsidiary, Paktel which it acquired from Millicom in early 2007 a Zong.

It has launched a major advertising campaign for Zong, with the catch-phrase 'Say it all'. Wang Jianzhou, chairman and CEO of China Mobile said: "Today is the landmark day not only for China Mobile but also for the cellular industry in Pakistan. We are continuing to invest hundreds of millions of dollars in Pakistan and we have a very long term view of this market. China Mobile has the resources and technical expertise to aim at becoming one of the largest operators of Pakistan."

According to a report in Pakistan Daily, China Mobile plans to invest \$US800 million in Zong by the end of 2008, providing jobs for around 5,000 people. According to the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority, Zong (Paktel) had 2.145 million customers at the end of February this year.

Telenor Pakistan picks Acision for messaging support

Telenor Pakistan has chosen Acision to support messaging, charging and usage monitoring to improve customer experience.

Acision is providing a next generation short message service centre (SMSC), pre-delivery service agent (PSA), a gateway for message charging and a business tools platform. According to Acision, the move will enable Telenor Pakistan to trial new messaging services and key features with customers before commercially launching them to the market.

"As a result of strong and sustained development in the region's mobile market, Telenor Pakistan, the country's fastest growing operator, is competing for new subscribers from a rapidly increasing customer base," it said

Acision's Pre-delivery Agent "will help Telenor Pakistan to benefit from a simplified message charging architecture, which reduces the complexity and cost of launching new service plans across both pre- and post-paid subscriber bases." Telenor Pakistan will use Acision's Business Tools to analyse subscriber usage patterns and obtain operational intelligence, enabling it to understand what its customers want and offer them value-added services through targeted marketing campaigns.

Telenor Pakistan is 100 percent owned by Telenor ASA which also has mobile operations in Thailand, Malaysia and Bangladesh. It is the world's seventh largest mobile operator with a total of 143 million subscribers.

Mobile operator Ufone has launched the 'Awaz SMS' service based on Voice SMS technology from Kirusa enabling its subscribers to send personalized 'Awaz SMS' messages to friends, family and colleagues across mobile networks in Pakistan.

The Awaz SMS service is available nationwide to all Ufone's prepaid and postpaid subscribers. To support the service, Kirusa has deployed Voice SMS application and multimodal platform, integrated with HP open call media platform in the Ufone network in Islamabad.

The service provides a user the facility to send SMS messages without having to go type a message on a mobile phone keypad. Instead, the user dials '99' followed by

the recipient's phone number, and records a short message of up to 30 seconds, in the language of his/her choice. A recipient on the Ufone network then receives a call from the network that will take him to his Voice SMS. If the recipient is on another network he/she will get an SMS message from the sender, and can directly dial a predefined number in the message to access the recorded message.

After listening to the message, Ufone subscribers can reply to an 'Awaz SMS' by voice, or by text, and can also forward the message. The sender also has the option to schedule the Awaz SMS for sending at a later time. A subscriber on another network also has an option to reply to an Awaz SMS sent by a Ufone subscriber.

Ufone subscribers will pay \$US0.018 to send an 'Awaz SMS.' They will be able to listen to the message free of charge for the first time, and will pay \$US0.012 per minute for subsequent listens.

Ufone is an Etisalat Group company and is Pakistan's second largest cellular operator with a subscriber base in excess of 15.5 million

Vietnam

Yankee Group says Vietnam will be "the next China"

The Yankee Group has flagged Vietnam as "the next China in terms of emerging hot economies" and predicts data networking revenue will exceed \$US740 Million by 2010.

It says that Vietnam is fuelling Asia-Pacific data connectivity demand, with a CAGR of 39.5 percent between 2007 and 2012. "As total corporate data revenue rises in Vietnam, there is tremendous growth potential for the country's data networking market."

According to Yankee Group, Vietnam's data networking market had revenues of less than \$US150 million in 2007 but there are now several development imperatives that are keeping Vietnam's data networking business thriving.

Yankee Group identifies five core developmental drivers:

- Vietnam's WTO accession is sparking pro-growth measures;
- Bandwidth enhancement is well under way;
- Vietnam is investing in next-generation technology for growth and transformation;
- Vietnam is leveraging the strength of telecom provider ACASIA to define new business goals;
- Foreign operators are taking a stand in Vietnam's telecommunications industry.

"Vietnam is a newcomer to the global connectivity revolution as communications and services continue to improve," said Agatha Poon, senior analyst in Yankee's Enterprise Research group. "Vietnam is expected to fare better than other ASEAN countries in data revenue because of the government's determined commitment to drive innovation and competition in the country."

Yankee Group says that Vietnam's telecommunications players must continue to ascertain the government's involvement specific to the post-WTO accession to stay competitive in the marketplace. "Until Vietnam conforms to the WTO mandates, foreign investors must play an active role in working with the regulatory body to define the ownership arrangement."

S-Phone to offer Qualcomm's BREW services

Qualcomm has signed an agreement with Vietnamese telco S-Fone to launch BREW services on S-Fone's CDMA network.

According to Qualcomm, BREW will enable S-Fone subscribers to shop for and download a wide variety of value-added services. Examples of content available

through BREW include music, ringtones, information, sports updates, games and financial applications.

Qualcomm also will provide S-Fone with a hosted data service, which, it says, will enable S-Fone to bring these services to their customers quickly. "Customers also can benefit from a portfolio of adaptable, modular products that can be used to address specific mobile retail challenges from general merchandising to personalised recommendations."

Taiwan

Motorola & UTStarcom deliver WiMAX to Fitel

Motorola and UTStarcom are working with Taiwanese telco First International Telecom (Fitel) to deploy a WiMAX network as part of the M-Taiwan project.

M-Taiwan is a government initiative to accelerate WiMAX ecosystem development and create a city-wide broadband network to support wireless broadband services to consumers. Fitel received its operator license to provide WiMAX services for northern Taiwan in July 2007.

Fitel already provides mobile communications services through its PHS network to over one million subscribers. It plans to complete and start testing the WiMAX base stations in the downtown area of Taipei by first half of 2008. The contract is Motorola's third WiMAX project secured in Taiwan in the last eight months, and its 19th worldwide.

South Korea

Training Partners to offer IT training at Daeduk College

Datacraft subsidiary, Training Partners, has set up an information technology training centre for corporations, government and students in Daejeon, South Korea in collaboration with Daeduk College.

Training Partners Korea has been appointed by Daeduk College to establish the government-funded training facility at the college premises and to provide certified network training courses.

"Daeduk College has a proud reputation for placing as many as 90 percent of our students in employment immediately after graduation." said Professor Kim Dowoo of Daeduk College "One of the ways we achieve this is by ensuring that they receive the very best training in both theory and practice, which would help increase their access to career opportunities upon graduation. Also, though there are many private and government related organisations in Daejeon, their employees have no access to high quality training in networking and security.

"This is why we enlisted the help of Training Partners to launch the IT training centre for networking courses, so as to meet the increased demand for IT professionals given the vital role IT plays in today's businesses. Training Partners was selected for its depth of networking expertise and experience in Korea, as well as its good client base and track record, having trained over 50,000 IT professionals in the region."

Training Partners claims to be one of the region's largest and most established Cisco Learning Solutions Partner (CLSP). It was awarded Cisco Learning Partner of the Year - 2007, and has achieved Cisco Learning Solution Partner-Developer (CLSP-D) status with the ability to co-develop technology courses with Cisco. Training Partners is also the exclusive authorised training organisation in Korea for both Juniper and Check Point. It was established in Singapore in 1994 and now operates in more than 20 cities in 13 countries in the region.

Macau

Macau's telco to offer Nortel/Microsoft unified comms

Macau - CTM, the only full telecom service provider in Macau, is offering its business customers unified communications services provided by Nortel and Microsoft through their Innovative Communications Alliance.

The Nortel Microsoft unified communications solution implemented by CTM combines Nortel Communication Server 1000 (CS 1000) and Microsoft Office Communications Server 2007 to provide one-click access to a broad range of collaboration capabilities.

According to Nortel, "CTM is one of hundreds of companies that have embraced the Nortel and Microsoft Innovative Communications Alliance since it was formed in July 2006. The solution helps companies transform business communications by taking the complexity out of implementing unified communications."

David Wong, managing director of Nortel Hong Kong, Macau and South China, said: "Since the formation of the alliance, customer adoption continues to accelerate with more than 600 wins for the companies' unified communications products...With the ability for an enterprise to deliver nearly 20 percent in productivity gains and realise a complete return on investment within six months of deploying a UC solution, the business benefits are profound. The Nortel Microsoft solution takes the complexity out of achieving those results."

Macau - CTM (Companhia de Telecomunicações de Macau SARL) is a joint venture between Cable and Wireless, Portugal Telecom, CITIC Pacific and Macao Post. It offers fixed telephony, mobile, Internet and enterprise solutions.

Pan Asia

240 million broadband users in AsiaPac by 2011

Ovum RHK is forecasting that there will be in excess of 240 million broadband subscribers in Asia Pacific by the end of 2011.

According to Lynn Hutcheson, vice president, communication components at Ovum RHK. "APAC has over 80 percent of the worldwide FTTx deployments. Many operators indicated that content services were going to be a key component of their offerings. However, there are vast differences as to how each country regulates IPTV and content delivery over telecom infrastructures."

The forecasts have been published by Ovum RHK in a 14-country assessment of broadband deployments and service drivers in the Asia-Pacific region, with a specific focus on FTTx. It is an update to an earlier study published by Ovum RHK in July 2007 and is based on interviews with major carriers and primary suppliers in Australia, China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, and Vietnam.

The study addresses FTTH/FTTB, DSL, and CMTS initiatives throughout the region. It was conducted jointly by Ovum RHK and the APAC FTTH Council.

According to Ovum RHK, "The report reveals other factors contributing to FTTx expansion including national broadband initiatives, inter-carrier competition, and delivery of basic broadband services [and] gives an in-depth analysis of the 14 countries, including the number of broadband subscribers by technology, broadband household penetration, key deployment drivers, major government and industry initiatives, regulatory issues, and timelines for FTTx deployment."

Telecom Asia hand out annual carrier awards

Telstra has won the Best Carrier and Best Mobile Carrier categories in the 11th annual Telecom Asia Awards.

Winners were chosen by an independent judging panel for their financial, market, technology and corporate governance performance, using research provide by global IT and telecom consultancy firm Ovum.

PCCW won the broadband trophy, BT Asia-Pacific the managed services category for the third year in succession and NTT Communications was voted Best Wholesale Carrier. Bill Barney, CEO of Hong Kong-based Pacnet, was voted Telecom CEO of the Year for his role in making the carrier one of the region's leading managed services and capacity providers.

The new Telecom Innovation of the Year award went to Bangladesh cellular firm Grameenphone for its CellBazaar service, which enables users to trade goods and services via a mobile device. Japan's NTT Commwas voted Best Wholesale Carrier, UK-based Inmarsat Best Satellite Carrier and HSPA was voted Best New Technology.

HSPA device options double in 12 months

GSA, the Global Mobile Suppliers Association says it latest survey shows 637 HSDPA products now launched and the number of suppliers increased from 62 to 110 over the past 12 months.

The survey found 211 HSDPA devices operating in the 850MHz band used by Telstra's Next G network and 145 operating in all three bands: 850/1900/2100MHz.

The breakdown of the total of 637 devices was: 303 mobile phones; 103 PC datacards (PC cards/embedded modules/chipsets); 103 notebooks; 60 wireless routers; 60 USB modems; seven personal media players with HSDPA-connectivity; one camera with HSDPA-connectivity. 190 HSDPA devices support a downlink capability of 3.6Mbps peak. 128 devices support, or can be upgraded for a high-speed downlink capability of 7.2Mbps peak.

According to GSA, the number of HSUPA-capable devices has doubled in six months to 66, most of which deliver up to 2.1Mbps (peak) on the uplink, and 12 of which support or are upgradeable to 5.76Mbps (peak). The survey found 70 HSPA devices also incorporate GPS/positioning functionality, compared to 20 six months ago.

GSA's HSPA Operator Commitments Survey in March 2008 reported that 116 commercial HSDPA operators (62 percent of the total) support downlink data speeds of 3.6Mbps peak or higher, and 38 had launched 7.2Mbps peak or higher. The majority of HSPA operators have installed GSM/EDGE and over 70 percent of HSPA devices also support GSM/EDGE.

Half the world uses a GSM phone

3G Americas, a wireless industry group advocating for the GSM family of technologies in the Americas, is citing research and projections by Informa Telecoms and Media to claim that the world population of GSM devices has now passed the three billion mark.

This represents 88 percent of the world's 3.5 billion mobile wireless subscriptions spread among a global population of six billion people. By way of comparison, it notes that there are only some 850 million personal computers worldwide that the GSM figure is nearly triple the number of people accessing the Internet and more than double the 1.3 billion fixed phone lines in operation. "The closest technology in terms of number of electronic devices is the number of television sets but even that number falls a full billion short of the three billion GSM/HSPA milestone, with an estimated two billion television sets in use today."

Equinix names new MD Aus and AsiaPac VP of sales

Data centre operator Equinix has promoted Darren Mann to be managing director of Equinix Australia and the former holder of the role, Doug Oates to a new role of vice president of sales for Asia Pacific.

Mann joined Equinix Australia in January 2001 as a senior account executive and was promoted to sales director in 2006. Before that he spent six years at IHS Australia as a member of the sales team selling online technical and regulatory database services to the university, construction & mining and defence sectors. Oates has been managing director of Equinix Australia since 2000.

Technology

First mobile WiMAX products certified

The WiMAX Forum has issued its first certifications for Mobile WiMAX products: to four base station and four subscriber unit modules all operating in the 2.3GHz band.

They have been developed by Posdata (Flyvo), Runcom Technologies, Samsung Electronics, LTD and Sequans Communications and all were on display at WiMAX Forum Asia Congress 2008, the WiMAX Forum's inaugural exposition taking place this week in Singapore.

Forum president, Ron Resnick, said he expected the first products for the 2.5GHz frequency achieve certification "in the coming months" and the Forum claims that "dozens of products" are registered for mobile WiMAX certification at the 2.3GHz and 2.5GHz frequencies and more than 100 products are expected to be certified for Mobile WiMAX by the end of 2008. It expects that more than 1,000 products will undergo mobile WiMAX certification testing by 2011.

"WiMAX is the only technology to certify base stations and terminals to ensure that interoperability is carried across all levels of the WiMAX network when WiMAX Forum certified products are used in a deployment," said Resnick. "When compared to other wireless standards, it is considered an improvement to test products with base stations to ensure interoperability, which is the core value proposition of the WiMAX Forum's standard."

According to the Forum, "products achieving Mobile WiMAX certification have gone through rigorous testing to ensure they meet the interoperability and conformance to standards of the WiMAX Forum. Testing includes ranging, idle mode, sleep mode, dynamic services, handover, power control, security applications, negotiations functions and more."

The products were certified in collaboration with the WiMAX Forum's lead certification testing laboratory, AT4 wireless, in Malaga, Spain, and members of the Telecommunications Technology Association's (TTA) IT Testing & Certification Lab from Seoul, Korea. The WiMAX Forum's current network of six labs in China, Korea, Spain, US and two in Taiwan will expand to eight by the end of 2008 with additions in India and Japan to handle the anticipated certification demand. The WiMAX Forum also plans to open a certification lab in Brazil in 2009.

KT to use WiMAX certified products

Also, Korean telco KT Corporation announced at the forum its intention to use WiMAX Forum certified products in its commercial network. KT deployed its first portion of its Mobile WiMAX network in 2006 and began full commercial services in the Seoul metropolitan area in April 2007. Currently KT has more than 140,000 customers on its WiMAX network and expects at least 410,000 subscribers by the end of 2008, covering more than 40 percent of the Korean population.