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India

Foreigners to be allowed to bid for 3G licences

According to the Economic Times the communications and IT ministry will allow foreign telcos to bid for 3G licences in the forthcoming auction.

The paper claims that the ministry has set a reserve price of about Rs22.60 billion (\$US523m) for telecom companies that want to participate in the pan-India auction for 3G spectrum. This is exactly double the reserve price recommended by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI).

The *Economic Times* says it has also learnt that the communications ministry has decided to allow international communication majors to participate in the auctions, if they have been providing 3G services for at least a ye; also against the recommendation of the TRAI. Indian telcos are also bitterly opposed to the entry of foreign players into the 3G market.

The Economic Times says the policy is due to be released within days but it claims that it will have stringent roll-out obligations: service providers will be subject to spectrum hoarding charge of 2.5 percent of the amount they bid for 3G spectrums, for every quarter, if they fail to meet the rollout obligations stipulated by the government.

New Skies to supply 'headend-in-the-sky for Essel pay TV service

Essel Group has contracted SES New Skies Satellite to provide C-band satellite capacity to support the digitalisation of its cable infrastructure that serves more than 70 million homes.

The agreement is for capacity ramping up to six transponders over a five year period. It is initially for capacity on NSS-703 at 57° East, but will transition to NSS-12 when it comes into service in 2009.

SES New Skies' satellite capacity will be used to support a new digital headend-in-the-sky (HITS) platform to distribute pay-TV signals to cable headends serving millions of Indian homes. WWIL, an Essel Group company, plans to convert its existing analogue cable service to HITS and to roll out a service of up to 150 digital channels across India.

The initiative is in line with the stated objective of the Indian government to speed up the deployment of digital infrastructure, and to enable conditional access services and value added services to more than 100 Indian cities and towns with populations greater than one million inhabitants.

"This capacity initiative complements and grows the very important relationship we have in place with SES for services which range from direct-to-home satellite, VSAT," said an Essel Group spokesperson.

SES New Skies already provides Ku-band capacity for Dish TV on NSS-6 and VSAT capacity on NSS-11 in cooperation with Antrix Corporation, the commercial arm of the Indian Space Research Organisation.

NSS-12 satellite will be available for commercial service in 2009, replacing NSS-703 at 57° East, and bringing increased C- and Ku-band capacity as well as optimised transmission power to a key orbital location at the crossroads of Europe and the Middle East, Africa, Asia and Australia.

It will have 88 C- and Ku-band transponders and will support a broad array of services, ranging from direct-to-home broadcast and video contribution, to maritime services and enterprise or government networks.

Shyam Telelink picks three CDMA suppliers

Shyam Telelink has selected ZTE, Alcatel-Lucent and Huawei to supply equipment for its CDMA 800MHz mobile network in India.

Each vendor will be allocated a specific geographic region for the deployment of equipment. The company says it considered a number of factors such as experience in implementation of large-scale projects, technical expertise, local resources and cost parameters in the evaluation of the tender participants.

The contract includes equipment delivery (including base stations, main radio- and switching subsystems and other auxiliary equipment) and provision of services related to network design, installation, start-up and commissioning.

Shyam Telelink has spectrum in 19 telecommunications circles, covering 27 Indian states with a population of one billion, around 94.5 percent of Indian population. The company is a subsidiary of Russian conglomerate Sistema.

Mountain university implements Nortel WiMAX & WiFi

The North Eastern Regional Institute of Science and Technology (NERIST) in Arunachal Pradesh has chosen Nortel's wireless mesh and WiMAX gear to deliver indoor and outdoor wireless connectivity across two campuses in very rugged terrain.

According to Nortel, by using its wireless technology, the institute can deliver high-speed connectivity across its entire campus as well as complete mobility for its students and staff. WiMAX is used to link the two campuses and users at both campus sites can access the Institute's network infrastructure using the wireless mesh network. The system operates in the unlicensed 5.8GHz band. This means that the Institute can use existing spectrum, saving the cost of licensing.

"NERIST anticipates over 70 percent savings on network operational costs by selecting Nortel's wireless mesh network technology rather than a standard WiFi solution," said Hitesh Lokhandwala, managing director, Nortel India. "Key to the reliability of the solution is the mesh network's ability to dynamically and seamlessly reroute traffic across individual access points with zero disruption. Add to that, the reduced capital expenditure of not requiring network connections to each access point as WiFi does. Also, the range of the mesh solution is typically around five to six times greater than standard WiFi. With all this, the combined Wireless Mesh/WiMAX solution is very beneficial."

China

Pacnet expands into China

Pacnet has announced expansion into China through the launch of Pacnet Business Solutions Limited, a 50/50 joint venture with Chinese ISP Zhong Ren Telecom.

According to Pacnet "this strategic alliance will enable both companies to leverage each other's strengths to offer advanced telecommunications services to small, medium and large enterprises in China...Our customers will also gain the benefits of seamless international connectivity via Pacnet's next generation EAC-C2C subsea cable network, which lands in Shanghai and Qingdao."

Zhong Ren Telecom has an IP VPN license for Guangdong province and an established presence in Southern China and Beijing. Prior to the signing of joint venture agreement it had a strategic partnership with Pacific Internet dating back to 2006. In January 2008, Pacific Internet was operationally integrated with regional subsea cable operator Asia Netcom to become Pacnet.

iPass expands WiFi access in China

Global Internet access provider, iPass is expanding its WiFi coverage in China through a partnership with Coordinate Technologies Communication Limited (CTCL).

CTCL is a systems integrator that provides the Wi-Fi roaming hub for leading Chinese carriers. iPass is now providing WiFi coverage in China through 600 live locations from CTCL, which it says represent the first phase of a rollout that will include the entire CTCL footprint of nearly 1,600 hotspots.

The move gives iPass users extensive WiFi coverage across the key cities hosting the Beijing Games in August. With a total of approximately 2,500 active wireless broadband locations available across China and Hong Kong, iPass claims to cover more than half of all available commercial WiFi hotspots, and complements this with a nationwide mobile broadband and dial-up footprint.

Through its partnership with CTCL, iPass will offer access in major Chinese business hubs including Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen, Guangzhou, Qingdao, Tianjin, Shenyang and Qinhuangdao. The CTCL network covers a variety of venues including nearly 50 international and domestic airports, more than 700 hotels including the Shangri-La and Crowne Plaza chains, Starbucks coffee shops and conference facilities.

The CTCL network infrastructure has completed iPass' Enterprise Ready Certification, which ensures high levels of access reliability and compatibility with enterprise systems.

Hong Kong

OFTA to auction 1800MHz spectrum

OFTA will auction 4.8MHz x blocks of spectrum in the 1800MHz band to existing mobile network operator for service expansion.

The spectrum will be divided into six blocks for bidding and each block will comprise 4.8MHz between 1780.1 – 1784.9MHz paired with 4.8MHz between 1875.1 – 1879.9MHz. Expiry date of the licences will be coterminous with the expiry date of the PCS mobile carrier licences, 29 September 2021.

The decision follows release of a discussion paper in January 2008, "Assignment of the Available Radio Spectrum in the 900MHz and 1800MHz Bands." OFTA has decided to defer the decision on the release of spectrum in the 900MHz band.

It will re-assess the market demand and the technical feasibility of sharing/co-assigning this spectrum in the light of the up-to-date plan for cross-boundary train services, and will consult the industry again on the assignment of all the available spare radio spectrum in the 800/900MHz band after the detailed design of the Express Rail Link is finalised.

Fees for the new 1800MHz spectrum will consist of two components: an annual variable component based on the calculation formula for 2G spectrum under the existing 2G licences and an additional up-front lump sum based on a sum committed by the successful bidder(s) in the forthcoming auction.

OFTA will use a simultaneous multi-round ascending auction and there will be no restriction or cap on the amount of spectrum that a bidder can acquire in the auction.

OFTA hopes to complete the necessary subsidiary legislation by end 2008, to publish the bidding documents or information memorandum in early 2009 and to conduct auction in the first half of 2009.

Japan

NTT Com opens new shorter link to Europe via Russia

The Hokkaido-Sakhalin Cable System (HSCS), which directly links the networks of Russian telco, TransTeleCom Company CJSC and NTT Comm has begun commercial operations.

The two companies jointly started to construct the system in 2007 and the work was completed in December 2007. It runs between Nevelsk, Sakhalin in Russia and Ishikari, Hokkaido, Japan, is 570km in length and has a capacity of 640Gbps. It gives NTT Com a much shorter route between Japan and Europe than existing cable routes through southern Asia and the United States.

The HSCS route will be added to the backbone of NTT Com's Arcstar Global IP-VPN Service (MPLS) beginning August 2008. NTT Com will use the new link to provide additional offering in Arcstar Global Leased Line Service and it estimates that latency will be reduced by 20 to 30 percent as a result.

TransTeleCom Company CJSC was founded in 1997. Its main shareholder is Russian Railways. It operates the largest fibre network in Russia, more than 55,000km long and laid along the country's railways. It has more than 1,000 access nodes in all regions of Russia and connects Europe and Asia.

NEC & Sumitomo to buy sub cable maker OCC

NEC and Sumitomo Electric Industries have acquired fibre optic submarine cable manufacturer OCC Holdings and its subsidiary OCC Corporation.

NEC and Sumitomo Electric will acquire 100 percent of OCC Holdings from investment funds managed by the Longreach Group. NEC will hold approximately 75 percent and Sumitomo Electric will hold approximately 25 percent of OCC Holdings. The acquisition is scheduled to be completed in July 2008.

According to Masamichi Imai, executive general manager of NEC's broadband networks operations unit, "This acquisition represents a strategic advancement for NEC, one of the leading suppliers of submarine cable systems, and Sumitomo Electric, a leading supplier of optical products, that secures stable access to a rich source of high quality; highly reliable optical submarine cables."

OCC Corporation was founded in 1935 and was the first Japanese company to manufacture submarine cable for telecommunications. Today, it claims an "unsurpassed reputation for designing and manufacturing superior undersea fibre optic cables." It has supplied over 140,000kms of submarine cable to date.

Singapore

WiFi for Singapore's giant Ferris Wheel

Datacraft has installed wireless switches and access points in all the 28 capsules of Singapore Flyer, the world's tallest observation wheel.

"This is the first time any vendor has implemented a wireless solution for such a high-rise, massive, spinning and continuously moving structure, which meant that we had no prior reference and had to start from scratch in designing, developing and deploying the solution," said Hidetaka Kai, general manager for Datacraft Japan. The service provides continuous audio and video entertainment during the 30-minute ride

Singapore Flyer is 42 storeys high and comprises a 150-metre diameter wheel, built over a three-story terminal building, giving it a total height of 165 metres and offers panoramic views of the city centre and beyond up to about 45 kilometres, including the Indonesian islands of Batam and Bintan, as well as Johor in Malaysia. It was officially opened on 15 April 2008.

Malaysia

Corporate responsibility initiative delivers free hotspot service *Alcatel-Lucent, Telekom Malaysia and Subang Jaya Municipality Council (MPSJ) have jointly set up a public Internet access centre in the MPSJ building.*

Subang Jaya residents visiting the MPSJ customer service centre can access the Internet using their WiFi-enabled devices free of charge while waiting for their turn to meet with the service counter officers.

According to Alcatel-Lucent, the joint initiative forms a platform for the three organisations upon which they can work together to create a communications infrastructure accessible to the public and at the same time fulfilling part of their respective corporate social responsibility obligations.

"Corporate social responsibility has always been an integral part of TM's business strategy," said Zulkapli Mustafa, general manager TM Retail MSC. "As the main coordinator of the PIAC project, we believe that a partnership model involving a local authority, such as MPSJ, Alcatel-Lucent, an experienced and well-respected infrastructure provider, and TM being a service provider, could leverage their respective resources and expertise to provide a service that truly benefits the whole community."

New Zealand

InternetNZ seeks assessment of broadband options

The Internet Society of New Zealand (InternetNZ) has issued an RFP for a consulting report to assess broadband strategy options for New Zealand.

Executive director Keith Davidson said announcements from political parties had spurred considerable public debate about how best to achieve a much higher level of broadband penetration for business and consumers, both urban and rural.

"The announcements offer differing visions and raise significant questions as to the best path forward to achieve widespread broadband penetration. With this RFP InternetNZ is taking a leadership role in researching and analysing the proposals and other current thinking both locally and internationally. We aim to inform the public debate and provide a base of pragmatic advice about the best way to proceed, given the high public interest in securing a successful outcome.. This is not a call for just another consulting report: we want concrete advice on how to roll out these services in the most cost effective manner."

InternetNZ says it expects other parties will make announcements prior to the general election and that an independent assessment of the best way forward will be a valuable input to the debate.

The RFP closes on 18 July. Its objective is to select an individual or organisation to "research and analyse options that have been raised along with other approaches that have been utilised internationally. There will be a two-stage process: stage one will encompass a discovery and literature review leading to recommendations as to what will be achievable. Production of the final report will be undertaken in stage two. InternetNZ is looking for a 'straw man' model with costings, possible investment approaches and the identification of any further work required.

Several significant broadband proposals

There have been three significant proposals put forward by different parties in recent months:

- In April 2008 The New Zealand Institute released a discussion document - *Delivering on the Broadband Aspiration: A Recommended Pathway to Fibre in New Zealand* - containing costed roadmap as the first part of a proposed project for New Zealand to "develop a fast path to fibre to capture the economic benefits."
- National Party leader John Key's leader's speech, *Achieving a Step Change: Better Broadband for New Zealand*, in April flagged a political intention to invest "up to \$NZ1.5 billion of Crown capital over six years to accelerate the roll-out of a fibre-to-the-home network for New Zealand."
- In its May 2008 budget, the Labour-led Government pledged \$NZ325m of operating spending to support rollout of broadband infrastructure on a contestable, technology-neutral basis. The figure included \$75m specifically for rural broadband.

Vodafone NZ launches 'home zone' mobile offering

Vodafone NZ has launched a service where its mobiles can act like a fixed phone with a fixed number and fixed line rates when used at home.

Vodafone NZ claims that, for the first time ever, New Zealanders can have all their calls – whether they're made to a mobile or landline number – on one phone "No more juggling multiple phone bills, no more missing important calls to your landline, just because you're out and about," Vodafone says.

According to Vodafone NZ's general manager of products and services, Kursten Shalfoon, "Local Zone is a massive advance for small business owners in particular, allowing them to add a landline to their business for less than half the price of a fixed landline. It also means both businesses and consumers alike can keep their existing geographic landline number so their customers, or their Mum, can call without worrying about cost, yet they have added simplicity and mobility."

Prices start from \$NZ20 for Local Zone - local, which gives unlimited local calls. National calling is 20c a minute and \$NZ2.50 for two hours and all calls to the landline number when out of zone are diverted to mobile voicemail as standard. Local Zone – national is \$NZ40 a month for unlimited local and national calling. Calls to the landline number can be diverted to ring on the mobile when out of zone for a fixed charge of \$NZ30 a month.

Vodafone NZ claims that customers on Telecom NZ's Anytime \$NZ42.40 per month fixed line plan can save up to 52 percent of costs with its Local Zone service.

Accurately limiting the 'home zone' in these services is key their commercial viability. Similar functionality was pioneered in Australia by Hutchison on its 3G network, but later abandoned only to be revived just months before Telstra's announcement of plans to close its CDMA network forced Hutchison to do the same - without roaming onto Telstra's network Hutchison could offer only very limited coverage. The word was that the technology was not sufficiently location specific and users were able to enjoy home zone tariffs over large areas

The service uses technology from Australian company Seeker Wireless. The technology was "created expressly to support fixed mobile substitution strategies," and, according to Seeker Wireless "Unlike HomeZone solutions currently deployed in Europe, the Seeker solution provides much smaller home zones, meaning mobile operators can reduce the revenue leakage caused when subscribers attempt calls some distance from their actual home...Results from recent operator trials and live deployments have shown that by locating mobiles more accurately, Seeker is able to greatly reduce the size of home zones by up to 45 times compared to existing Cell-ID based home zone systems."

The technology relies on a small application running in the cellphone which is able to determine its location by measuring the relative strengths of all the base stations within range. The handset then reports back into the network when, and only when, it is moved into or out of the home zone. This enable the operator to apply the appropriate tariff and other service parameters of the converged offering, but without massive investment in additional technology and without loading up its network and central systems to manage the determination of the handset's location.

Commerce Commission determines backhaul prices

New Zealand's Commerce Commission has released its final determinations on the price and non-price terms for backhaul services to support the unbundled local loop and unbundled bitstream broadband services.

The move will regulate prices for transmission capacity between Telecom NZ's local exchanges and competitors' own networks. Telecommunications commissioner, Dr Ross Patterson, said that backhaul would be regulated only where Telecom faced limited competition, ie on most South Island primary and secondary links.

The determinations follow the Commission's final determinations for the ULL and co-location services released in November 2007 and for the unbundled bitstream service released in December 2007. The sub-loop unbundling determination is expected to be released by the end of 2008.

Telecom NZ selects NetCracker OSS to support separation

Telecom NZ has selected NetCracker's OSS suite to speed the delivery of services and the expansion of its next generation networks.

NetCracker software will also support Telecom's formal operational separation into distinct business units. Telecom NZ has acquired NetCracker's order management, customer impact analysis, service inventory and resource inventory modules and NetCracker Framework. These, according to NetCracker, will enable it to migrate legacy systems, improve data quality, accelerate the deployment of next generation services, and improve the customer experience.

Fiji

Vodafone Fiji implements Emagine churn reduction

A joint project between Australian owned Emagine International and partner LGR Telecommunications, announced in January, under which Vodafone Fiji has implemented Emagine's real-time trigger marketing system with LGR's CDRLive data warehouse solution has gone live with claimed significant churn reduction.

According to Emagine, an exercise using the system resulted in a 2.5 times increase in recharges compared with the control group. "Vodafone Fiji's recharge stimulation campaigns will significantly reduce the time it takes for a reward to be delivered to the customer...through direct integration with Vodafone Fiji's IN for Pre-Pay customers."

Emagine CEO, David Peters, said: "A typical telecommunications company would see this sort of campaign normally take 24 to 48 hours to execute, as a result of delays in processing. The near real-time turn-around with Vodafone Fiji has been achieved through near real-time integration directly with Vodafone Fiji's existing pre-pay intelligent network. This is a great demonstration of real time marketing in action, a direction in which the telecommunications industry is moving generally."

Emagine has also set up a centre of excellence in campaign management in the country that will see Vodafone Fiji used as a test market for Emagine product releases, new features, and value added services."

- **Vodafone Fiji signs 600,000th customer**

Vodafone Fiji this week announced the signing of its 600,000th customer. The company began offering GSM services in July 1994 and it now covers more than 60 percent of Fiji's population, predominantly on the two largest islands of Viti Levu and Vanua Levu.

Technology

NGMN Alliance teams with Femto Forum and GSMA

The NGMN Alliance, a group focused on the evolution to the next generation of mobile networks, will cooperate with the Femto Forum to ensure that next generation mobile networks can incorporate femtocells and with the GSM Association on backward compatibility between LTE and existing networks.

The Femto Forum and the NGMN Alliance will work together to define technology requirements and make recommendations which will then be converted into solutions to be developed within the Femto Forum and promoted jointly. The aim is to ensure that next generation mobile networks can incorporate femtocells from the very beginning of their deployment rather than integrating the technology afterwards.

They expect this to enable mobile operators to use femtocells to manage the cost of rollouts, plan spectrum use and ensure optimum coverage and capacity where it is needed. The two bodies say they will establish clear performance targets, fundamental recommendations and deployment scenarios for next generation mobile broadband networks incorporating femtocells and to help ensure that cost/performance ratios are optimised. Peter Meissner, operating officer of the NGMN Alliance, claimed that the partnership would "offer operators a completely different approach to network rollout than exists today."

NGMN, GSMA alliance to ensure roaming

Separately the NGMN Alliance and the GSM Association have announced a co-operation to ensure that users of next generation mobile networks, such as those based on the Long Term Evolution (LTE) standard, will be able to roam onto existing GSM, W-CDMA and HSPA networks. They also intend to co-operate in other essential areas related to the development of next generation mobile broadband services, such as intellectual property rights and spectrum requirements.

Commenting on this relationship, Meissner said: "Our agreement is not just about liaison, it is project driven and we have clearly identified those areas where the mobile industry needs to cooperate. We are happy to share our milestone achievements in technology evaluation, trials, IPR and spectrum."

The NGMN Alliance consists of 52 global network operators, technology vendors and universities. The operators represent more than half of all mobile phone users worldwide and technology vendors represent more than 90 percent of implemented mobile wireless infrastructure. Its recommendations include a clear requirement for a cost-optimised indoor node design, for self-organising networks with automated self-optimising and self-configuring functionality. It says that femtocells are the first example of a self-organising network and therefore meet both these requirements.

- **Vodafone dreams of femto 'hotspots'**

Vodafone Group's head of new technologies and innovation, Kenny Graham, has proposed the installation of femtocells in public places in metropolitan areas. *Unstrung* quotes him telling the Femtocells Europe 2008 conference in London that the attributes that make femtocells ideal for deployment in homes and offices - localised coverage, improved performance, self-configuration, self-optimisation, and

low cost - also make them ideal to provide increased capacity and better coverage at a lower cost, compared to deploying more macro cell sites. However he added that this 'metro zone' concept seemed more appropriate for the future when LTE has been established.

Global vendors unite to fight patent trolls

A number of global IT companies, reported to be Cisco, Google, Hewlett-Packard, Motorola, Sun Microsystems, Telefon, Ericsson, and Verizon Communications have formed the Allied Security Trust which aims to buy up patents identified by its members as being important and then licensing these to member companies.

It will do this with a fund made up of \$US5m contributions from member companies, according to reports. Member companies who wish to participate in a particular patent purchase are granted a worldwide non-exclusive patent license.

The trust does not aim to profit from patents it acquires nor does it intend to engage in patent assertions against other companies. "AST maintains a 'catch-and-release' commitment that returns to the market in a timely manner patents acquired on behalf of Trust members after licenses are secured," according to its web site.

The Trust has been formed to "address the increasing need for innovative companies to defend against costly patent law suits." It explains that there has been a marked increase in patent assertions and litigation involving high tech companies by patent holding companies, also known as NPEs (non-practicing entities) also known as 'patent trolls'.

"These organisations produce no products or services of their own, and acquire patents, sometimes hundreds of them, with the sole intention of asserting them against operating companies and conducting patent litigation to extract settlements or licensing fees."

The trust says that successful high tech companies are frequently approached by patent holding companies that have purchased patents purely for the purpose of asserting them against operating companies. "It costs operating companies an average of \$US3.2m through to the end of discovery and \$US5.2m through trial to defend these cases when there is more than \$US25 million at stake."

According to the trust, even a small claim is highly disruptive and simply settling with a patent troll may be the best option. "These lawsuits are not only a huge distraction for management, but they also draw R&D and other resources away from other projects and may hinder a company's ability to provide new products in a timely manner."

Cellular players team to ensure safe mobile surfing

The world's leading mobile network operators, including 3, AT&T, T-Mobile, Telenor, Telefónica, Telecom Italia and Vodafone have and launched an initiative to encourage the development of mobile applications without compromising customer security.

The new initiative, to be known as Bondi, after Australia's most famous beach will operate Under the umbrella of the Open Mobile Terminal Platform (OMTP). The name was chosen "because OMTP wants mobile customers to have the greatest surfing experience whilst making the experience as safe as possible."

Bondi aims to provide a consistent and secure web services interface that can be used by all web developers across multiple device platforms, providing the opportunity for web developers to address a mass market of consumers and to drive the use of data services on mobile devices by exposing key handset features to web

developers to help them develop more function-rich, user friendly and relevant applications.

The new handset software will be "engineered in such a way as to prevent fraudulent and malicious activity through unauthorised access to functions or sensitive personal information." The group says that Bondi will "harmonise the various open and proprietary ongoing initiatives" and will "minimise the potential for technology fragmentation in this exciting area."

The OMTP is, according to its web site "an operator-sponsored forum that serves the needs of each and every link in the mobile phone value chain by gathering and driving mobile terminal requirements." There are currently eight full members - the Bondi backers and Orange - and 35 sponsors.

Hopefully Australians will be flattered by the OMTP's adoption of a great Australian icon, unlike the government of Fiji which has taken serious umbrage at Microsoft for naming its next operating system after the country.

PDF becomes an international standard

Adobe's Portable Document Format (PDF) has become an international standard - ISO 32000-1 - following a decision by Adobe to relinquish control to the International Standards Organisation.

ISO will now be responsible for publishing the specifications for the current version (1.7) and for updating and developing future versions. The move, according to Adobe CTO, Kevin Lynch, is in response to governments and organisations increasingly requesting open formats. "Maintenance of the PDF specification by an external and participatory organisation will help continue to drive innovation and expand the rich PDF ecosystem that has evolved over the past 15 years," he said.

ISO secretary-general Alan Bryden, said: "As an ISO standard, we can ensure that this useful and widely popular format is easily available to all interested stakeholders. The standard will benefit both software developers and users by encouraging the propagation and dissemination of a common technology that cuts across systems and is designed for long term survival."

The new standard, ISO 32000-1, Document management – Portable document format – Part 1: PDF 1.7 "supplies the essential information needed by developers of software that creates PDF files, software that reads existing PDF files and interprets their contents for display and interaction, and PDF products that read and/or write PDF files for a variety of other purposes (conforming products)."

Future versions of PDF will be published as subsequent parts of the standard by the ISO subcommittee in charge of its maintenance and development (SC 2, Application issues, of ISO technical committee ISO/TC 171, Document management applications). The standard costs 370 Swiss francs (\$A378) and is available from ISO national member institutes and from the ISO online store.

Pan Asia

Ovum warns of possible sub cable bubble

Analyst and consulting firm, Ovum, is warning of a possible price crash for services on international submarine cables because significant additional capacity is due to come on stream in the next few years.

According to Ovum, "investment in new Asian cables market was dormant between 2002 and 2006 as a glut of capacity was slowly used up. However, during 2007 a number of new trans-Pacific and intra-Asian cable investments were announced. These systems are scheduled to come on line during the 2008-2010 period, and will add significant new capacity."

According to Ovum research director, David Kennedy, there are several reasons for this: the rising prices for IP bandwidth in certain markets; growing demand for additional routes, following the disruption of networks during the Taiwan earthquake of December 2006; pushes by domestic operators to secure capacity to support future broadband growth and a small number of large carriers aspiring to create global networks that reach most major country markets.

"The trans-Pacific market will see a 120 percent growth in total operating capacity in 2008 alone. But demand growth is also high, and could absorb this capacity in as little as three years", said Kennedy. "Whether market disruption occurs will depend on how investors and operators act after 2008. If new systems continue to be announced and built in 2009 and 2010, and the operators start to aggressively market their excess capacity, then disruption seems more likely. However, this isn't inevitable. If a prudent approach to investment is adopted, and the new submarine cable operators marshal their capacity for their own future needs, then a smoother path is distinctly possible."

Kennedy says that the key to avoiding a bubble is "to take a sensible approach to investment and respond to real market conditions. Domestic operators, existing international providers and global wholesale companies all need to play their role. The domestic operators building new cables in the region should keep the emphasis on provisioning for future domestic demand – not competing for market share in the international business. Domestic growth must discipline international investment. Secondly the established international operators should also avoid triggering a price war by pre-emptively dropping prices.

"Thirdly, prospective investors should keep an open mind on investments after 2009, and avoid precipitating a supply overhang in the market. Securing genuine pre-sales will be the key to maintaining commercial discipline." Ovum has just published a report on undersea cables which "highlights the risks and opportunities in the international undersea cable market."

comScore reports on Asia Internet usage

comScore has released findings on the Asia-Pacific market from its report "The State of the Global Internet with a Focus on Asia," which will be presented via free Webcast from Singapore and Japan in July.

It reports that, during the past year, the Asia-Pacific Internet audience (at home and work locations among users age 15 and older) grew 14 percent to 319 million visitors in April 2008, outpacing the growth of all other worldwide regions. The strongest growth 27 percent to more than 28 million Internet users, occurred in India, followed by China, which grew 14 percent to more than 102 million visitors. Taiwan, Malaysia and New Zealand also achieved double-digit growth.

	Apr-07	Apr-08	% Change
Asia Pacific	280,418	318,623	14
China	90,274	102,848	14
Japan	53,685	55,260	3
India	22,395	28,375	27
South Korea	26,323	25,652	-3
Australia	10,048	10,904	9
Taiwan	9,245	10,388	12
Malaysia	7,462	8,327	12
Hong Kong	3,525	3,718	5
Singapore	2,216	2,298	4
New Zealand	1,937	2,161	12

* Excludes traffic from public computers such as Internet cafes or access from mobile phones or PDAs.

comScore notes that:

- although each of the top 10 global Internet properties is based in the United States, each one sources the majority of its audience from outside the US;
- half of the top 20 properties in the Asia-Pacific region are locally-owned entities;
- although Google Sites and Yahoo! Sites between them capture the majority of search share in the Asia-Pacific region, five of the top 10 search properties are regional engines. These include China's Baidu.com and Korea's NHN Corporation (Naver.com).
- Internet users in Hong Kong, South Korea, Singapore, Taiwan and Australia spend the most time online in the region, but still spend less time than the worldwide average.
- while Facebook.com is the leading social networking site worldwide, Friendster.com is the top social networking site in the Asia-Pacific region.

Cyber university to train health care professionals

The International University of Business & Technology (IUBT) is offering degrees in business management and health sciences claiming that academic program delivery will be done by acclaimed faculty across the world and shall be monitored and controlled by university professors from US to ensure quality.

The university hopes to bring relief to severe shortage of trained public health practitioners, information technologists in healthcare, and qualified administrators for hospitals and other healthcare entities.

IUBT claims to have designed world class graduate certificate and master programs that are cost effective, have a global reach and will benefit the students from third world countries who find it very expensive to come to US for studies. It will offer graduate certificate and masters degree programs in management and healthcare sciences – MBA, healthcare administration (MHA), healthcare informatics (MHI), and public health (MPH).

"The University will offer absolutely free preparatory courses to anyone who wishes to strengthen academic background prior to taking graduate certificate and/or master program. These courses are offered round the year and students complete them at their own pace. This is a unique attraction unheard of being offered by any other university." says professor Purnendu Mandal.

"The courses are delivered through a customised Web University portal which is a virtual campus of learning. The portal is available to students around the world, regardless of geographic boundaries." says Mohammad Subedar. Course assignments and submission will be online. The class participants will be able to interact with fellow students.

"The programs of this university will be in great demand throughout the world, especially in the Middle East, Asian and other developing countries considering both affordability and accessibility issues," said professor Angappa Gunasekaran.

IUBT has entered into a strategic relationship with STG to provide education technologies and Internet delivery of its programs. Course material will be delivered through STG's SmartLink, claimed to be the first truly integrated e-learning platform. It is claimed to provides web based collaboration, learning management and content management tools on an open, scalable, secure and web based modular platform.