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India

VoIP, MVNO, 3G and MNP combine to boost Indian market

In recent weeks, the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has recommended removing restrictions on VoIP, recommended allowing MVNOs, and mobile number portability, and the auctioning of 3G spectrum auction later this year.

According to Ovum, this series of policy decisions will encourage the development of the telecoms industry and strengthen competition in the fixed and mobile markets. "Removal of the restrictions around VoIP means that calls can be received on the PSTN rather than just soft-clients," Ovum analyst Charice Wang said. "The government announced plans to open up VoIP services back in 2002 but calls between IP and PSTN were not permitted. With limited growth in the VoIP market, the regulator has decided to lift the ban on ISPs providing VoIP to and from telephones connected to the PSTN."

Wang said: "We think VoIP will experience strong growth over the next few years, with the combined effects of deregulation and growing broadband penetration. There are currently 4.38 million broadband subscribers in India. The government has a target of 20 million broadband users by 2010."

She added: "We expect competition in the Indian mobile market to intensify as a result of the new measures...The government will finalise the 3G spectrum auction process by the end of September. Depending on the spectrum available, the number of licences could grow to 12...[and] the Indian mobile market is an attractive market for new entrants, being in the early stages of development and with strong growth potential from rural areas. "India currently has a low level of mobile penetration (about 25 percent), but growth figures look extremely promising; subscribers increased by around 10 million over the last month, resulting in a total mobile subscriber base of 296 million as of July 2008."

The government has announced that mobile number portability will start in the four metropolitan areas in next two months and will be implemented country-wide by June 2009.

- **China told to follow India's example**

Wang added: "India provides a good example for China to follow. With a large population of over one billion, strong potential in its telecom market, and soon to be issued 3G licences, the Chinese market looks similarly attractive, but its regulatory reform is far behind India. IP to PSTN calls are restricted, MVNOs are not allowed and MNP has yet to be established. The 3G licences that will be granted are limited to three recent restructurings of state-owned telcos. The regulatory reform in India could provide a useful lesson for its neighbour China, as the Chinese regulator considers the liberalisation of its telecoms market."

Tech Mahindra targets Euro offshoring market with Servista

Tech Mahindra, the largest independent India-based IT services provider in the telecom space, is to acquire a minority equity stake in Servista, a European systems integrator.

As a part of the agreement, Tech Mahindra will be Servista's exclusive delivery arm for three years and will also assist Servista in securing more large scale European IT offshoring business. Tech Mahindra will have the right to nominate a member onto Servista's board. Tech Mahindra says the deal will drive its expansion into the European market place and will significantly enhance its business development capability.

Servista provides managed IT services on an offshore basis with core offerings in operating and business systems such as CRM, billing, operational workflow, IT systems transformation and testing. It also claims to have an established and well proven platform to provide white label customer care and billing services to telephony and utility providers that enable them to grow revenues, reduce costs and deliver outstanding customer service.

According to Servista CEO, Ben Andradi, "There is substantial potential for growth, which is reflected in current demand, as European companies are at relatively early stages in their use of IT offshoring for competitive advantage, compared to their American counterparts."

- **BT rumoured to be pulling out of Tech Mahindra**

BT may sell its 31 percent stake in Tech Mahindra, the *Financial Times* has reported, According to the *FT*, BT is contemplating selling out because the joint software services venture does not fit with its long-term strategy.

It said the sale, if it eventuates, would be one of the largest in the Indian outsourcing industry: Tech Mahindra has a market capitalisation of about \$US2.2b. Mahindra & Mahindra, which owns about 41 percent of Tech Mahindra, is not expected to bid for the stake as it wants the company to remain listed, the *FT* said.

Interviewed on CNBC about the deal, Tech Mahindra's president international operations, CP Gurnani, said: "When I saw this news on the web, I was surprised but then rumours or stories have their own way. A month back somebody called me up exactly for the same reason but that time it said that BT is buying Tech Mahindra's stake, now you hear BT is selling its stake. It's nothing that I am aware of and is definitely not on the cards."

BSNL trials 3G in Pune

BSNL has launched a pilot 3G network in Pune, the first in India, according to Business Standard.

It will provide 2Mbps data connectivity to 2,000 BSNL post-payment mobile subscribers in Pune, initially at no charge. "While the controversial procedure for spectrum allocation for 3G services across the country continues, BSNL rolled out its 3G services for subscribers having Plan-725 on a first-come-first-serve basis in Pune. Thanks to the 2Mbps bandwidth, BSNL will provide facilities such as video conferencing, video calling, video MMS and visual mail box to the subscribers, *Business Standard* said.

Chandra Prakash, chief of BSNL's Maharashtra and Goa circle, said: "We have partnered with mobile solutions vendors ITI and Alcatel-Lucent India to provide 3G services. With the present capacity, we will offer this facility to 2,000 subscribers. Being a pilot project, the service will be free-of-charge."

BSNL plans to introduce 3G services in 56 cities and towns across the Maharashtra and Goa circle, for which the company has invested Rs3 billion. 3G services are expected to cost 20 to 30 percent more than current GPRS or EDGE services.

Atom mobile payments platform now Visa PABP certified

Indian mobile payment services company, Atom Technologies, has been accredited with Visa Payment Application Best Practices (PABP) certification for its atom (sic) soon-to-be-announced m-payments platform.

According to Atom Technologies, "The PABP certification testifies that atom adheres to all norms which are critical to ascertain the highest level of security standards for storing, processing and transmitting confidential information of m-banking consumers as part of authorisation and settlement. Atom Technologies is now India's first and only end-to-end m-payments provider to receive this certification."

Atom Technologies is a retail initiative of the Financial Technologies Group that "conceptualises, develops and markets technology, products and platforms to serve as a catalyst to unlock value in the retail transaction ecosystem, leveraging the mobile communication infrastructure."

The atom mobile payment platform enables transactions through customers' mobile phones, be it payments over the Internet, money transfers, ticket booking, loyalty programs, day-to-day shopping, home delivery or cash withdrawal at an ATM machine. Atom also has an IVR-based solution which enables automated acceptance of credit card payments over the phone without any manual intervention.

Sify brings Google Apps to India

Sify Technologies has teamed up with Google to bring the Google Apps suite of communication and collaboration tools, including email, chat and online documents, to Indian Internet users.

Google Apps will power Sifymail and chat, as well as other applications using the Google Apps platform, which would be leveraged across Sify's network infrastructure, reaching over a million users across India and abroad.

Raju Vegesna, chairman & CEO of Sify said: "We believe that we can make compelling applications, tools and content based on Google's expertise for many more Indians to use the Internet to enhance their productivity and quality of life. This agreement enhances our relationship with Google beyond powering the search on Sify.com."

Sify provides Internet access in India through the ePort cyber café chain and home broadband access, as well as interactive rich media content with sites such as Sify.com for news, sports, finance, games, shopping and video content, Sifymax.com for broadband entertainment content, Samachar.com for global Indians to stay in touch with everything Indian.

It is among the largest managed enterprise and consumer Internet services companies in India, offering a range of products delivered over a common telecom data network infrastructure reaching 500+ cities and towns in India. A significant part of the company's revenue is derived from corporate services, which include corporate connectivity, network and communications solutions, security, network management services, enterprise applications and hosting.

Sify also has licenses to operate national and international long distance services and offers VoIP back haul to long distance subscriber telephony services. Its consumer services include broadband home access, dial up connectivity and the e-port cyber café chain across 180 cities and towns.

China

China Netcom results show transition from basic voice

China Netcom has announced its unaudited results for the first half of 2008 saying that the performance of broadband and other new services helped to offset the continuing negative impact of fixed-mobile substitution.

"In the first half of 2008, revenue generated from innovative businesses made up for most of the decline in traditional fixed-line services, which created a solid foundation for the company's growth in future," the company said.

For the six months ended 30 June, 2008 China Netcom generated revenue of RMB41.1b (\$US6.0b) which included upfront connection fees of RMB0.51b. (\$US0.074b). Excluding upfront connection fees, revenue was RMB4.6b (\$US0.67b), representing a decrease of 0.15 percent over the same period last year. Net profit was RMB5.9b (\$US0.86b), up 11.9 percent year on year because of the change in

corporate tax rate and gain on non-cash transactions. Excluding the impact of non-cash transactions, the net profit was up 3.2 percent year-on year.

During the first half China Netcom says it integrated its resources for actively developing innovative businesses, including broadband services, ICT, value-added services and advertising and media services in its push for transformation into a "broadband communications and multimedia services provider", and achieved good results in the strategy. The revenue generated from innovative businesses grew by 26.2 percent to RMB16.5b (\$US2.41b) and accounted for 40.6 percent of total revenues, up 8.5 percent over the same period of last year.

At June 30, 2008 the number of broadband subscribers stood at 23.6b. The company's share of the broadband market in its serviced areas was 90.4 percent, up 1.5 percentage points year-on-year. Revenue from broadband services was RMB8.9b (\$US1.3b), a year-on-year increase of 38.8 percent. Broadband services accounted for 21.8 percent of total revenues, up 6.1 percentage points over the same period of last year. ARPU was RMB68.5 (\$US10.0b). Revenue generated from broadband content and applications was RMB1.3b (\$US0.19b), up 69 percent over the same period of last year.

At June 30, 2008 China Netcom had 108.510 million local access subscribers, 2.3 million less than at the end of 2007. Of this number, fixed-line subscribers declined by 1.5m, while PHS subscribers declined by 0.8m.

Looking forward, chairman Zuo Xunsheng said: "We will continue the transformation of the 'Family 1+' service in order to meet the demand of the household subscribers for high-quality multimedia services during informatisation and to enhance the value of the fixed-line network. Meanwhile, we believe that the company's merger with China Unicom will support and strengthen execution of these strategies. The merger will enable the new company to give full play to the competitive advantages of both predecessor companies, and bring the synergy of the mobile and fixed-line networks into play. The new company is also expected to have access to a 3G license. These will enable the new company to have an edge and to be better positioned in the domestic telecommunications market. The merger will increase shareholder value of both companies."

AsiaInfo to provide billing and CRM to China Telecom

AsiaInfo has won a tender from China Telecom to develop billing and CRM systems for its subsidiaries in Heilongjiang and Henan provinces.

Under the recently announced restructuring plan for China's telecommunications industry, China Telecom will acquire China Unicom's CDMA network. To ensure the successful operation of the CDMA network and the smooth migration of existing CDMA users from China Unicom, AsiaInfo expects to develop a full set of independent billing and CRM solutions for Heilongjiang Telecom and Henan Telecom. The new systems will be able to accommodate mobile, broadband and fixed line operations and are expected to be online at the end of this year.

Steve Zhang, AsiaInfo's president and CEO said the company's software would help China Telecom to transform from a primarily fixed-line and broadband operator to an integrated telecommunications provider with nationwide services and a diversified product offering. "In the midst of industry's restructuring, we continue to see significant opportunities as three newly integrated service providers ramp up competition on a levelled playing field, increasing the demand for leading software and services."

He added: "This win further validates our efforts to gain market share among all of China's telecom operators and lays the foundation for future cooperation in promising areas such as value-added services and business intelligence solutions."

AsiaInfo began operations in the United States in 1993 and moved major operations to China in 1995, playing a significant role in the construction of the national backbones and provincial access networks for all of China's major national telecom carriers, including China Telecom, China Mobile, China Unicom and China Netcom. It became a prominent supplier of IT security products and services in China with the acquisition of Lenovo's non-telecom related IT services business in 2004 and since 1998 has continued diversifying its product offerings and is now a major provider of telecom software solutions in China.

Nanjing Uni deploys campus-wide Motorola WLAN

Motorola has deployed a campus-wide wireless LAN for Nanjing University of Posts and Telecommunications, one of the top universities in China.

It will enable multimedia Internet-based teaching, automatic academic office management, Internet access, long-distance teaching and many other services and, according to Motorola, makes the university one of only a few in China to provide complete wireless LAN coverage to every building in addition to the campus' outdoor spaces.

"Motorola's wireless LAN solutions will provide the university with reliable, end-to-end coverage, security and manageability both outdoors and inside academic and administrative buildings, hostels, and canteens," said Jian-Zheng Xu, campus network manager, Nanjing University of Posts and Telecommunications.

To deliver campus-wide coverage spanning more than 0.5 million square metres and with the potential to support 15,000 users, the WLAN required 600 access points (APs) including Motorola AP300 wireless access ports and mesh-enabled AP-5131 access points.

The mesh connectivity of the AP-5131 complements the existing wired network points and extends the WLAN outdoors blanketing virtually every open space across the university. Motorola's enterprise WLAN solution centrally manages all the wireless APs and integrates with the telecommunications network.

The system can provide backup data for two campuses so that the WLAN coverage will not be affected if either the wireless network or wired network is disrupted. User verification is managed through a central verification platform at the campus network centre to ensure security, stability and manageability of the network.

South Korea

Nokia Siemens relinquishes control of Dasan Networks

Nokia Siemens Networks is to sell its 56 percent stake in Korea's Dasan Networks to Dasan Invest, Dasan TPS, Skylake Ltd, and certain individual Korean investors.

The CEO and founder of Dasan Networks, Mr Nam Min Woo, will continue in his role. Dasan Networks has been supplying broadband access equipment and services to Nokia Siemens Networks since its formation in 1993.

Nam Win Moo said: "The share purchase agreement will support Dasan Networks' ambition to act as an independent provider of networking solutions selling its products through direct sales channels in its core markets of Korea and Japan while continuing its close cooperation with Nokia Siemens Networks in other markets.

Martin Lüst, the head of the broadband access business unit at Nokia Siemens Networks, said: "The agreement will clarify our R&D and operations set-up in our business unit, complimenting Nokia Siemens Networks' strategy of building on third party relations and streamlining its investments to become all the more efficient and a leader in industry profitability."

He added: "Nokia Siemens Networks will maintain a solid foothold in Korea, one of the leading and most technologically advanced markets in Asia, and plans to continue close cooperation with Dasan Networks through an original equipment manufacturer and original design manufacturer agreement. Dasan products will remain part of broadband access solution and product portfolio and this agreement will not lead to changes in terms of customer support and contracts related to Dasan Networks' portfolio."

Dasan Networks claims to be the largest networks equipment company in Korea, with about 400 employees. It produces carrier ethernet and TPS equipment. The company is located in Bundang, Korea.

Japan

New head for Foundry Networks Japan

Foundry Networks has named Masakazu Aoba as country manager for enterprise and service provider sales in Japan.

"Japan is a key market Foundry has been committed to for more than 11 years," said Bobby Johnson, president and CEO for Foundry Networks. "Mr. Aoba's sales development expertise will be an important asset for Foundry as we continue to deliver new product innovations and strengthen the strategic relationships we have with our channel partners, and large enterprise and service provider end-users."

Prior to joining Foundry Aoba had 14 years of technical and sales management experience with Cisco Systems where he built its commercial sales organisation from the ground up and drove substantial revenue growth within the Japanese market. Before that he spent 10 years at IBM Japan in senior engineering roles where he architected and deployed new data networks for large enterprises.

Foundry Networks is a provider of enterprise and service provider switching, routing, security and Web traffic management solutions, including layer 2/3 LAN switches, layer 3 backbone switches, layer 4-7 application switches, wireless LAN and access points, metro and core routers. Its claims that its customers include "the world's premier ISPs, metro service providers, and enterprises, including e-commerce sites, universities, entertainment, health and wellness, government, financial and manufacturing companies."

New Zealand

NZ Gov't invites application for \$NZ340m broadband funds

Applications have opened for the New Zealand Government's \$NZ340m Broadband Investment Fund (BIF) which makes \$NZ325m available for operating and \$NZ15m for capital expenses over a maximum of five years.

Its aim is to accelerate investment in: facilitating high speed broadband to businesses and entities such as municipalities, universities, schools and hospitals in urban centres; extending the reach of broadband into underserved regions, particularly in the rural sector; and improving the resilience of New Zealand's international connections.

"Over forty submissions were received from interested parties on the draft criteria and process for BIF applications. The submissions provided valuable input into the contestable process for distributing funds," communications minister David Cunliffe said. He claimed that the fund would "maximise competition, assist investor certainty and give the best possible leverage for the taxpayer's dollar." Applications close on 30 September.

Thailand

Thailand gets Asia Pacific's first Cisco mobile WiMAX net

Cisco has deployed its first WiMAX network in Asia Pacific at Mae Fah Luang University in Thailand.

The network will also, according to Cisco, be the first of its kind in Thailand. The University selected TT&T to deploy the network, and the decision to use Cisco gear was made by TT&T. Managing director, Prachuab Tantinon, said: "We chose Cisco because of its proven expertise and leadership in networking technology." Cisco's mobile WiMAX gear combines both adaptive beamforming and beamformed multiple-input multiple-output (MIMO) technologies.

French Polynesia

Tikiphone goes HSPA in Tahiti

French Polynesian mobile service provider, Tikiphone, will soon launch French Polynesia's first 3G+ network.

It will upgrade its network in Papeete, Tahiti, to high speed packet access (HSPA) technology to support a full range of high-speed mobile Internet and data services.

Tikiphone will introduce Alcatel-Lucent's HSDPA solution to offer its customers new mobile broadband services, which will be several times faster than the current network.

"Tikiphone's objective is to offer optimum mobile and data services to subscribers in French Polynesia. The success of our i-Vini content portal and our Internet mobile service has demonstrated the huge potential of mobile broadband and the Alcatel-Lucent HSPA tailored solution proposed by API has met our expectations to deliver new 3G+ services," said Yannick Teriierooiterai, general manager of Tikiphone. "We think that HSPA combined with GSM/EDGE is the most cost-effective solution for delivering service continuity and the best user experience."

API will deploy a suite of Alcatel-Lucent systems including the 9311 Macro Node B suite of products, media gateways and 9100 GSM Base station. Alcatel-Lucent has supported the rollout of Tikiphone's network since 1995, including installation and testing for a trial of HSDPA in 2007.

Tikiphone is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Office des Postes et des Télécommunications and provides services to more than 180,000 customers. Its 2G network covers 98 percent of the French Polynesian islands.

Indonesia

Indosat picks NEC for IP backhaul upgrade

PT Indosat, Indonesia's second largest mobile phone carrier, has selected NEC to upgrade the backhaul for its mobile network to IP operation.

NEC will supply its ultra-compact microwave communications systems, Pasolink, and CX2600 service consolidation switches. In order to remain competitive, Indosat is seeking to have its entire 3G network prepared for IP as soon as possible.

According to NEC, "This latest project capitalises on the CX2600 to manage existing legacy circuits and bundle them into an IP structure. The system is then incorporated with Pasolink technologies in order to create an all-IP-based mobile backhaul that holds operational costs in check by taking advantage of existing infrastructure and smoothly transferring to IP."

Pan Asia

Google planning Asian sub cable investment

According to TeleGeography, Google is working with a consortium of carriers planning to build the Southeast Asia Japan Cable (SJC).

The move follows Google's investment in the Unity trans-Pacific submarine cable system and the new cable will link Unity's landing station in Japan to Guam, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Thailand and Singapore. SJC is still in the planning stage and the consortium has yet to announce a supply contract. "Given the current flurry of undersea cables under construction, the SJC cable will probably not be ready for service until 2011 at the earliest," said TeleGeography analyst Alan Mauldin.

TeleGeography says that the members of the SJC consortium are nearly identical to Unity. Google, Bharti, SingTel, KDDI and Global Transit are participating in both. Pacnet, which will control two fibre pairs on Unity, already operates the EAC-C2C intra-Asian mesh cable system and consequently is not involved with SJC. Globe Telecom of the Philippines and TOT of Thailand are also members of SJC and will be the landings parties for the cable in their respective countries.

Bringing customer support in house pays off from 3Com

3Com Asia Pacific claims to have improved customer support significantly after restructuring its professional services division.

It bought the bulk of its Global Services Organisation in-house in November 2007. The restructuring was part of a US\$12m global service improvement effort that included two new multi-lingual call centre functions based in Australia and the Philippines.

According to 3Com, in its annual customer satisfaction survey conducted by an independent company, customers gave 3Com AP a six out of a maximum seven rating in 12 out of 14 different service aspects. customer satisfaction rating rose to 85 percent from 70 percent a year ago.

For AP customers with warranty support issues, calls go direct to non-technical staff at a call centre in the Philippines while more complex support contract calls – 95 percent of which are technical in nature – go direct to 3Com engineers in the Sydney call centre.

"By using dedicated in-house 3Com engineers on the line for priority contract customers, 3Com is able to cut resolution times because a majority of the technical questions can be answered immediately," the company said. According to John Wardell, Field Service Delivery manager for 3Com Asia Pacific, 3Com's contract support customers are delighted to hear a 3Com person on the line who is quick to understand the issue and offer a solution.

3Com says it is already strengthening its professional services engineering teams across Australia, India, Malaysia, Korea and Thailand to assist implementation partners for larger, more complex deployments that involve 3Com's latest technologies.

Wardell added that localisation support has also been boosted with more Korean and Thai service agents on the regional services team. "Our priorities in the next 12 months are to continue to improve customer satisfaction, revenues and profitability from the services business."

Technology

Nominum clobbers DNS cache poisoning vulnerability

Internet software company, Nominum, has released a new version of its DNS server software that is claimed to offer much greater protection from the notorious DNS cache poisoning vulnerability unveiled earlier this year by security researcher Dan Kaminsky.

By exploiting the cache poisoning vulnerability hackers can insert a false IP address into the cache of domain name-to IP-address references maintained by all ISPs, and many enterprises, and redirect a request for a genuine site to one of their choosing.

Nominum provides DNS services for some 120 million broadband users around the world and it was quick off the mark to implement the initial fix for the Kaminsky vulnerability. However this fix, a technique known as UDP source port randomisation, did not address the underlying problem: it simply made exploitation several orders of magnitude harder. And in fact one researcher claims to have already cracked this protection but he was operating over a 10GBE Lan which enabled him to make many more attempts per hour than would be possible over the public Internet.

Now, according to Nominum, a new release of its Vantio caching DNS server platform "provides multi-layer intelligent defences that defeat DNS cache poisoning and other attacks, including the recently publicised Kaminsky vulnerability...[and that] far surpasses the recently released industry standard UDP source port randomisation (UDP SPR)...[and] negates the brute force advantage attackers gained with the latest DNS cache poisoning vulnerability.'

Dr Paul Mockapetris, chairman and chief scientist at Nominum and inventor of the DNS, said: "Literally one day after details of the Kaminsky cache poisoning attack were revealed, UDP source port randomisation was defeated in 10 hours by security researchers using brute-force spoofed response. Nominum's multi-layered approach eliminates the risk of a successful attack."

Key benefits claimed for the new release are that it:

- Resists and stops all forms of cache poisoning attacks;
- Defends automatically against query response spoofing and takes attackers out of loop;
- Prevents hijacking of subscriber traffic, or 'pharming' attacks;
- Identifies perpetrators and records attack attempts;
- Provides protection in enterprise and service provider networks that use network address translation (NAT), which can undermine UDP SPR;
- Reduces the chance of poisoning answers for valuable domains to zero.

Tandberg & Intel bring high-def video-conferencing to PCs

Tandberg has given the first public preview of its PC video conferencing technology, operating at 720p30 resolution.

The system used a Tandberg PrecisionHD camera operating on an Intel Mobile Core 2 Quad laptop formerly codenamed 'Montevina', running Tandberg's Movi software.

"While other vendors offer consumer-acceptable PC videoconferencing, we have demonstrated the video quality that businesses require to adopt PC video communications," said Fredrik Halvorsen, Tandberg CEO. "It enables mobile workers to achieve the increased trust and faster decision-making already experienced by users of desktop and room-based video conferencing and telepresence systems."

Movi will be commercially available in early 2009 and, according to Tandberg, is "based on videoconferencing industry standards making it possible to connect people with co-workers using any standards compliant telepresence, conference room video conferencing or executive desktop video systems."

According to Dadi Perlmutter, executive vice president and general manager, Intel Mobility Group. "The Intel Mobile Core 2 Quad mobile processor not only provides the performance headroom for high-definition videoconferencing on laptops, but is able to execute the demanding workloads and applications running concurrently, making it a compelling solution for businesses today. Working with the Intel software team, Tandberg was able to take advantage of the optimising tools to provide high-definition videoconferencing with low-CPU utilisation."

Intel & Yahoo! plan to merge Internet & TV

Intel and Yahoo! have unveiled plans for the Widget Channel, a TV application framework that will allow consumers to enjoy rich Internet applications designed for the TV while watching TV programs.

It will be based on the Yahoo! Widget Engine that will support TV Widgets, small Internet applications "designed to complement and enhance the traditional TV watching experience and bring content, information and community features available on the Internet within easy reach of the remote control."

The Widget Channel will also allow developers to use JavaScript, XML, HTML and Adobe Flash technology to write TV applications for the platform. Yahoo! will also provide consumers with Yahoo!-branded TV Widgets.

"TV will fundamentally change how we talk about, imagine and experience the Internet," said Eric Kim, Intel senior vice president and general manager of the company's Digital Home Group. "No longer just a passive experience unless the viewer wants it that way, Intel and Yahoo! are proposing a way where the TV and Internet are as interactive, and seamless, as possible. Our close work has produced an exciting application framework upon which the industry can collaborate, innovate and differentiate. This effort is one of what we believe will be many exciting new ways to bring the Internet to the TV, and it really shows the potential of what consumers can look forward to."

Underlying the Widget Channel will be a set of platform technologies, including the Yahoo! Widget Engine and core libraries that expose the functions enabled by the Intel Architecture. The Widget Channel framework will "use established Internet technologies to dramatically lower the barrier of entry for developing applications optimised for TV."

To help create new TV Widgets for the Widget Channel, Intel and Yahoo! plan to make a development kit available to developers, including TV and other CE device makers, advertisers and publishers. The Widget Channel will also include a Widget Gallery, to which developers can publish their TV Widgets across multiple TV and related CE devices and through which consumers can view and select the TV Widgets they would like to use.

Intel and Yahoo! say they are already working with a range of companies that are planning on developing and deploying TV Widgets, including Blockbuster, CBS Interactive, CinemaNow, Cinequest, Disney-ABC Television Group, eBay, GE, Group M, Joost, MTV, Samsung Electronics, Schematic, Showtime, Toshiba and Twitter.

Intel also plans to release the Intel Media Processor CE 3100-based hardware development system called the "Innovation Platform" which will provide the initial development and validation environment for developers of TV Widgets on the Widget Channel. Intel and Yahoo! say they are working with industry members to promote the development of open and consistent standards necessary to grow the TV Widget ecosystem. This includes sharing an early version of a development kit for the Widget Channel with selected TV Widget developers.