

ExchangeAsia

Volume 16 Issue 47

ISSN 1320 – 2669

07 December 2008

Singapore

Bids in for NGN OpCo contract

The Government has received four bids for the OpCo NGN contract.

China

China Telecom awards four TD-SCDMA contracts

AlcaLu to expand China Telecom's CDMA network

Alcatel-Lucent has been selected by China Telecom to increase the capacity

Huawei to build five city 40G network for China Telecom

Motorola & CIECC open M-Commerce lab

Japan

KDDI awards LTE contract to Nortel & Hitachi

NTT DoCoMo deploys HP's OpenCall media platform

India

Chhattisgarh deploys Juniper gear for eGovernment net

APNIC refutes IPV4 shortage claims

Vietnam

VTI signs up for Ipstar capacity

Thaicom has signed a contract with Vietnam Telecom International for Ipstar capacity of 7Mbps worth about \$US3.45 million over three years.

Australia

Funding problem sinks Pipe Networks sub cable

Pipe Networks' ambitious plan to build a submarine cable between Sydney and Guam is on hold after negotiations with financial backers collapsed.

Ericsson to shed 100 staff in Australia and NZ

Telecom NZ hand .nz name server management to InternetNZ

Telecom NZ offers inbound roaming on 850MHz 3G network

Fiji

Datacraft rolls out MPLS net for Fiji Telecom

Pan Asia

AT&T launches global VPLS service

Technology

Nokia Siemens claims first LTE- Advanced demo

NGN IMS Forum says IMS ready for prime time

Mobile web site use surges, but usability lacking

Singapore

Bids in for NGN OpCo contract

The Singapore Government has received four bids for the OpCo next generation network contract.

The bidders are SingTel, StarHub, Mobile One and a consortium comprising Axia Netmedia of Canada and Cisco. In September The Singapore Government named the Axia Networks-led OpenNet Consortium to design, build and operate the passive infrastructure for its nextgen broadband net.

OpenNet's other members are SingTel, Singapore Press Holdings and SP Telecommunications. Mobile One and StarHub per both members of the Infinity consortium, led by City Telecom of Hong Kong, which lost out to OpenNet for the NetCo contract

As the NetCo, OpenNet will design, build and operate the passive infrastructure of the Next Gen NBN that will be capable of delivering speeds of up to 1Gbps and beyond. Consumers and businesses can look forward to accessing the all-fibre network from as early as 2010. OpCo will use this infrastructure to design, build and operate the active infrastructure that will provide wholesale broadband connectivity to other operating companies and RSPs.

The Next Gen NBN OpCo RFP was issued on 7 April 2008. It closed on 5 December 2008.

Mark Chong Chin Kok, SingTel's executive vice president of Networks, said: "SingTel has submitted a very compelling proposal to be the OpCo, based on the latest broadband technology and backed by our vast operating experience, knowledge and expertise in the telecommunications industry." He added that SingTel, given its strong cashflow, does not expect to tap the financial market for additional funds should it be appointed as the OpCo.

Axia issued a very brief statement announcing that it had bid, but giving no other details, and making no mention of its partnership with Cisco

China

China Telecom awards four TD-SCDMA contracts

The chairman and CEO of China Telecom, Wang Jianzhou has told Dow Jones that his company has granted contracts to four telecommunications equipment vendors in a tender for its locally developed TD-SCDMA network.

He said that contracts had gone to ZTE, Huawei, Datang Telecommunication Technology and Ericsson. The values of the individual contracts was not given, but Jianzhou confirmed a statement from Ericsson last month that it had received a five percent share of the total contract, valued at \$US\$21.8 million.

AlcaLu to expand China Telecom's CDMA network

Alcatel-Lucent has been selected by China Telecom to increase the capacity and coverage of its CDMA mobile voice and data network throughout the country.

The \$US230m contract was secured through Alcatel Shanghai Bell, Alcatel-Lucent's Chinese flagship company which will provide network infrastructure in 56 cities of nine provinces in China.

The deployment is currently underway and the expanded network will begin providing commercial services by the end of 2008. Alcatel Shanghai Bell also will provide IP service routers and applications platforms and services for the deployment.

Alcatel Shanghai Bell will provide a range of base stations designed to fit a wide variety of deployment scenarios, from those designed to serve usage-heavy urban areas to those suited to providing coverage in more rural areas where populations are more dispersed.

These bases stations all use many common hardware and software elements, allowing for easier maintenance and lower operating costs, and can be readily upgraded to support 3G services in the future, the company claims.

Huawei to build five city 40G network for China Telecom

Huawei Technologies has been selected to build China Unicom's first 40Gbps optical transport network across five major cities around Beijing in Northern China.

The network will substantially increase China Unicom's network capacity and enable it to meet the increasing demand for high-bandwidth broadband from China's business and residential customers using new multimedia services.

The 40G WDM system adopts Huawei's, claimed, unique C-band extension technology which increases the fibre transport bandwidth by an extra 20 percent and enables transport capacity of 3.84Tbps. It also provides comprehensive encoding technologies and cost-effective services across different application scenarios, Huawei claims.

Huawei has also successfully commercialised its 40Gbps WDM products in Europe, North America and Asia Pacific, and has deployed the longest 40Gbps trunk in the world without using electrical regenerators: 1,141kms s from Moscow to St Petersburg.

Recently, Huawei has also made public its 100Gbps and 100GE WDM prototypes and claims to be the first company in the industry to master these end-to-end transport technologies.

Motorola & CIECC open M-Commerce lab

Motorola opened what it says is China's first M-Commerce laboratory, in Beijing, in collaboration with China International Electronic Commerce Centre (CIECC).

"By leveraging this laboratory, Motorola and its partners are able to develop the ecosystem and pre-integrate and validate the solution prior to commercial deployments in China," the company said.

The M-Commerce Laboratory is "designed to bridge the gap among industry, government and academia to facilitate certain aspects in the M-Commerce environment such as research and commercialisation of mobile applications, mobile payment and security, and enterprise mobile commerce application," according to Motorola.

"By providing an environment to study, develop and promote projects in the mobile commerce domain, the laboratory can help to enhance end-to-end innovation capabilities."

"M-Commerce will play an important role in China's economic growth, specifically when the country is focusing in driving domestic demand," said Mr Liu Junsheng, general director of CIECC.

"Our goal is to develop key enablers, nurture the M-Commerce practice and business environment, and provide services to help enterprises mobilize their business. The

establishment of M-Commerce Laboratory will play a vital role in facilitating mobile commerce development in China."

The laboratory creates a platform for industry players to communicate and cooperate with each other. In addition to regular workshops and forums, it will also help members to screen out and identify projects for further commercial operation, speeding up the transition process from theory to commercial applications with the help of industry experts and academic institutions.

These efforts will not only cultivate the mobile commerce environments, but also create real business opportunities for all companies who want to leverage M-Commerce, Motorola says.

(CIECC), an agency operating under the Ministry of Commerce, is responsible for development of electronic information projects. It is charged with the mission to develop, operate and maintain China international electronic commerce website, the core website of the Golden Gate project of the country's key informationalisation construction projects. CIECC is also committed to facilitate international cooperation and exchanges in the electronic commerce with other countries at the state level.

Japan

KDDI awards LTE contract to Nortel & Hitachi

KDDI, Japan's second largest cellular operator, has awarded a contract to Hitachi and Nortel for the supply and deployment of an LTE network.

It will, according to Nortel, "provide an overlay to the existing CDMA mobile network, enabling instant access to the bandwidth-intensive multimedia content and applications demanded by KDDI's tech savvy 30 million mobile consumers and business users."

Hitachi Communication Technologies Limited, a fully owned subsidiary of Hitachi, will take a major role of solution development with Nortel.

"We chose Hitachi and Nortel to collaborate with us on this journey because of their proven technology leadership, their experience, expertise in delivering differentiated solutions and time to market advantage which allows us to launch services quickly," said Masahiro Inoue, associate senior vice president, KDDI.

"Nortel has demonstrated clear technology leadership in early LTE trials with industry-firsts in high-speed mobility handover and in LTE interworking with CDMA which is the base of our current network. Nortel also offers an open standards approach and proof of true multi-vendor compatibility - all of which are essential to KDDI's needs."

The contract includes the deployment of a new evolved packet core (EPC) from Hitachi, featuring Nortel's new ATCA-based access gateway as a mobility management entity (MME) as well as an evolution to KDDI's existing operation, management and provisioning system to ensure a seamless upgrade path to the new network.

Nortel has recently showcased its LTE technology through an 'everyday conditions' live mobile trial with T-Mobile in Bonn, Germany. Nortel was also selected as one of the trial partners for Verizon, the leading CDMA service provider in the US, as Verizon looks to enhance its CDMA network with LTE.

In October of this year, Japanese mobile newcomer, Emobile said it would seek a trial LTE licence from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications. The company, which currently has no network of its own, said it plans to hold a field trial during the first five months of 2009 in the Shimbashi area of the Minato ward in Tokyo. Emobile says it aims to adopt LTE during the first half of 2011.

NTT DoCoMo deploys HP's OpenCall media platform

NTT DoCoMo has deployed a standards-based media server from HP to reduce costs and shorten time to market for new services.

NTT DoCoMo is migrating its 54 million customers to the HP OpenCall media platform, which is designed to enhance the quality of voice-activated services. The server supports offerings such as voice mail services, customised ringback tone services and interactive voice response services and is designed to support many of NTT DoCoMo's multimedia services.

It is integrated within a core network node of NTT DoCoMo and consolidates a variety of services onto a single platform to increase efficiency. With its 20,000 audio ports, the HP OpenCall Media Platform handles existing demand – and can be scaled up in a cost-effective way to meet future needs, HP says.

"As a software-based Internet Protocol (IP) media server, the HP OpenCall Media Platform can take advantage of industry-standard technologies such as VoiceXML and session initiation protocol. As a result, NTT DoCoMo is able to significantly reduce the complexity of developing new applications – and reduce the time needed to bring new services to market."

"The HP OpenCall Media Platform is an open, proven media server that helps us reduce internal costs – and provide our customers with more responsive service," said Yukichi Saito, director, Service Support Node Development Group, Research and Development Centre, NTT DOCOMO. "During deployment, HP worked very closely with the NTT DOCOMO team to meet our aggressive timeline for launch."

According to Steve Dietch, vice president, marketing, communications and media solutions, HP, "NTT DoCoMo is showing that commercial technologies, optimised by HP for telecom, can reduce costs and accelerate delivery of new services – without sacrificing carrier-grade performance and reliability,"

HP says it worked with NTT DoCoMo to build a complete solution around the media server, including management software, storage, hardware and integration services.

The HP OpenCall software runs on the HP BladeSystem Carrier-grade platform with the Linux operating system. Storage is based on industry-standard HP StorageWorks EFS CGW and XP10000 enterprise virtual arrays. Management functions are handled by HP Operations Software. HP provided consulting and integration services to integrate the solution into NTT DoCoMo's network.

India

Chhattisgarh deploys Juniper gear for eGovernment net

The Government of Chhattisgarh has deployed Juniper Networks routing and security products to link its public agencies and deliver e-government services secured using online validation and digital certificates.

The Chhattisgarh Government (through CHIIPS, India's nodal agency for e-governance) is creating a convergent, hybrid network for audio, video and data based on fixed lines, satellite (VSAT) and radio frequency technologies.

Chhattisgarh will use Juniper Networks M- and J-series routers and Integrated Security Gateways to support an extensive range of government services, including Chhattisgarh Online Information for Citizen Empowerment (CHOiCE) which offers citizens 130 online government services.

'This is one of the nation's largest infrastructure deployments to date and forms the cornerstone of our state-wide WiMAX plans,' said Aman Kumar Singh secretary (IT) GoC and CEO CHIIPS.

APNIC refutes IPV4 shortage claims

The Asia Pacific Network Information Centre (APNIC) has responded to claims that India is short of IPv4 addresses saying these were 'misguided'.

The comments were made at the 3rd meeting of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) in Hyderabad on 3 December. In a workshop entitled "IPv6: The solution for the future Internet", speakers from the local industry suggested that a shortage of IPv4 addresses was partly responsible for slowing Indian Internet growth.

The director general of APNIC, Paul Wilson, said: "It is widely accepted that the current pool of unallocated IPv4 address space will soon be completely exhausted and that the deployment of IPv6 is an important solution for all economies...[but] based on a continuation of the rapid and accelerating deployment of IPv4 addresses, there are still around two years supply of IPv4 addresses available.

"In other words, there is still a large number of addresses available, and ISPs which can show a need for those addresses will certainly receive them. In fact, this month, China reached a total of [almost 170 million addresses]."

India ranks second in terms of the number of ISPs receiving addresses from APNIC, but ranks sixth in total allocations of IPv4 in the Asia Pacific region.

"We are seeing that while there are actually many networks in India, they do not appear to be growing as quickly as ongoing IPv4 allocations to them would seem to suggest", said Wilson.

"This situation reflects industry conditions in India which are entirely independent of IP address supply or IP addressing policies."

He added: "It is a concern to me that Indian IPv4 address allocations remain so low. Addresses are available equally to all ISPs that request them, regardless of their location, and APNIC declines very few requests for IPv4 address space.

"There is still a large number of addresses available, and ISPs which can show a need for those addresses will certainly receive them." said Wilson.

He added: "It is great to see the very strong interest in IPv6 at IGF in Hyderabad. However, it seems India's Internet Industry sees IPv6 as a solution to the relatively slow pace of Internet growth. On the contrary, IPv6 will make no difference in India if the local environment does not encourage healthy growth of a diverse and competitive Internet industry."

Vietnam

VTI signs up for Ipstar capacity

Thaicom, operator of the Ipstar satellite broadband system, has signed a contract with Vietnam Telecom International (VTI), a subsidiary company of Vietnam Posts and Telecommunications, for Ipstar capacity of 7Mbps worth about \$US3.45 million over three years.

Ipstar has launched broadband satellite services in Vietnam with VTI through VTI's VSAT-IP brand. VTI offers a variety of services to both individuals and corporate users. For example, it provides GSM trunking services to mobile operators to enable them to cost effectively extend their networks to rural areas.

Thaicom says this new agreement will enable VTI to expand its Ipstar services to serve applications such as broadband Internet access, mobile trunking, rural voice services and virtual private networks (VPN).

According to Mr Makin Petplai, vice president of Thaicom, "Since Ipstar commenced services in Vietnam over two years ago, VTI has successfully deployed broadband services to serve their needs throughout the country. In addition, we also acquired

Ku-band capacity on their Vinasat-1 satellite to serve our Ipstar customers in Indochina that are not served by Thaicom-4's footprint. This represents the close collaboration and partnership between the two companies. "

Australia

Funding problem sinks Pipe Networks sub cable

Pipe Networks' ambitious plan to build a submarine cable between Sydney and Guam is on hold after negotiations with financial backers collapsed.

The company requested a trading halt in its shares on 1 December saying that, if it cannot secure alternative funding arrangements it will take a \$30m write-off in the current financial year.

Pipe told the ASX that its subsidiary, Pipe International, had "withdrawn from proposed arrangements with financiers of the PPC-1 undersea cable project and is now negotiating with customers and suppliers as to the future of this project."

It said that these negotiations "are incomplete and remain confidential and the outcome is likely to affect the company's share price." It added that it was "encouraged by the recent progress made regarding alternate funding arrangements," but at this stage they remain incomplete.

On 4 December it requested its shares be suspended until 8 December saying that ongoing negotiations had progressed significantly but were still incomplete.

Pipe International said its decision to withdraw was the result of "the unacceptable delays in the credit approval process." Its parent company's annual report, released in late September, said it was in final negotiations with ANZ Bank in relation to debt funding for PPC-1 and expected a credit application to be made by the end of September 2008.

It expected that any finance facility would include terms that would require, prior to draw-down, additional capacity sales and/or additional equity contribution, final cable landing permits and final completion of any remaining due diligence. Pipe said it was working towards satisfaction of these conditions and that it was "confident that it will receive an offer of construction finance in the near term."

The annual report also said that Pipe had already secured a number of sales representing six percent of the potential capacity of the system and was "in various stages of negotiation with interested parties for over \$US60 million of capacity sales."

The report noted that the project "is a major undertaking requiring significant financial support and that "availability of sufficient funds to meet payment terms of supply contracts is critical to the timely construction of the system."

Prospects look good

However, Pipe remains bullish about the prospects for the venture saying that "The underlying demand for future capacity sales on PPC-1 remains robust. Pioneer Consulting, an independent expert advisor to the telecommunications sector, has recently predicted in due diligence investigations that, by 2012, PPC-1 should be able to achieve a 22 percent share of the incremental international wholesale capacity market connecting to Australia.

"Pioneer's analysis also indicates PPC-1 will benefit from access to Pipe Networks' existing customer base and the ability to deliver end-to-end services, particularly in Australia where Pipe Networks has its own terrestrial network for backhaul."

On the down side, since the project was conceived it has faced increased competition from a new Telstra cable linking Sydney to Hawaii and its main rival, Southern Cross Cable whose near monopoly was cited as a key reason for Pipe's decision to build the

cable, has recently effectively almost halved its prices for ISPs who are prepared to maintain new capacity purchases on the system at their previous rates. They will be able to purchase fully redundant links for the price of a single circuit.

Progress on the PPC-1 is already well advanced and the cable has been manufactured and is ready to lay. Pipe has been keeping the world continuously updated via a dedicated web site.

Ericsson to shed 100 staff in Australia and NZ

Ericsson is to shed about 100 staff and 200 contractors in Australia and New Zealand over the next six months.

It says this represents the local implementation of a global cost cutting programme announced in February and impending project completions, rather than a consequence of the current global economic troubles.

"We feel pretty good about the local telco market," Ericsson ANZ spokesman, John Papanidis told *ExchangeAsia*. He said that staff cuts would be made all levels "including members of the executive management team." He said that about 10 jobs were expected to go in New Zealand. "The NZ market is still in the process of consultation...The number has not yet been finalised."

Ericsson said the changes were "designed to improve the efficiency and competitiveness of the organisation." It employs around 1660 permanent employees and around 400 people provided through contracting firms.

The company said that all retrenched employees would receive their full entitlements, with Ericsson's policies "providing for 'above market' terms as well as the provision of outplacement, financial planning and counselling services support."

Plans for the global cutback were revealed in Ericsson's fourth quarter results announcement in February. CEO Carl-Henric Svanberg said that market growth had slowed during the prior year. "...for 2008 we find it prudent to plan for a flattish mobile infrastructure market. We will intensify our operational excellence programs and reduce our cost base to safeguard our competitive position."

The company said that cost reductions of four billion Swedish krona would be made to annual expenditure, with full effect in 2009 (about \$US0.5b at today's exchange rate). "All parts of the business will be affected, but the main focus areas are SG&A, sourcing, supply and service delivery." One-time charges were estimated to SEK 4 billion to be recognised as each activity is decided. The company said a reduction of approximately 1,000 employees was expected Sweden and would be made through voluntary programs as far as possible.

In October 2008 Ericsson announced its third quarter financial results, posting an operating profit of 5.7 billion Swedish krona (\$US772.5m) and sales growth of 13 percent. Svanberg said that the organisation was seeing initial positive effects from the cost reduction programme.

Telecom NZ hands .nz name server management to InternetNZ New Zealand Registry Services (NZRS) a subsidiary of the Internet Society of New Zealand (InternetNZ) has taken control from Telecom New Zealand of the authoritative .nz name server.

"Bringing the server under NZRS' control will lead to greater reporting and monitoring of the NS7 .nz name servers. It will also enable the smoother addition of servers to other parts of the network, if required," NZRS General manager, Nick Griffin, said. "The new server uses a technology called anycast, where multiple servers respond to the same IP address, resulting in faster query times. It adds additional robustness and offers better resistance to large-scale denial of service attacks," he added.

NZRS operates and manages the registry of .nz domain names and the operation of the domain name system (DNS) in the .nz domain name space. It said The replacement was part of a wider project aimed at improving the .nz DNS infrastructure. "There is no impact on the .nz DNS as a result of the change."

Telecom NZ offers inbound roaming on 850MHz 3G network ***Telecom New Zealand has started offering 3G services to overseas visitors on its new 850MHz network.***

Initial agreements are with Telstra and with Digicel which operates networks in several Pacific Island nations. By June Telecoms says it will be able to offer customers from over 170 countries voice and texting to those destinations and to 110 destinations for Internet data.

Telecom's new mobile network now has active coverage for inbound customers in the Auckland CBD, Auckland airport and city-to-airport commuter route. Work is also on track for similar coverage in Wellington and Christchurch by early 2009. Telecom expects to have national coverage by June.

Fiji

Datacraft rolls out MPLS net for Fiji Telecom ***Datacraft New Zealand has rolled out a new IP network for Telecom Fiji to meet growing demand in the run up to telecom market deregulation.***

The new network is based on a Cisco MPLS platform and consists of a territory-wide IP backbone combined with a metro ethernet network in the capital city of Suva.

According to Datacraft it will enable Fiji Telecom, the incumbent operator, to stay ahead of competition by providing the platform for the latest range of business services such as high speed data, capacity on demand and VoIP while ensuring customer satisfaction by meeting tough quality of service (QOS) goals.

The network was completed in seven months at a cost of around \$US1 million. Datacraft has been involved in scoping the project since 2003.

"With the continuing rise of the Internet, we have seen rising customer expectations for new services, as well as traffic growth that the old network could no longer match," said Ian Lyons, group general manager sales, marketing and business development for Telecom Fiji. "Datacraft demonstrated an awareness of the unique political, social and regulatory environment that we face in Fiji and the company came up with a carefully evaluated plan that met our demanding requirements, while being capable of meeting our expanding market needs into the future."

Telecom Fiji is also evaluating Datacraft support offerings, Insite and Uptime. Insite is an online, real-time network and IT systems management service that covers issues ranging from basic fault monitoring to extensive predictive analysis and reporting. Uptime provides a 24 x 7 managed service for trouble shooting and resolution of issues facing mission-critical IT systems.

Pan Asia

AT&T launches global VPLS service ***AT&T has expanded the reach of its global ethernet services with the launch of a virtual private local area network service (VPLS) in 14 countries across Europe and Asia Pac.***

The service is now available in a total of 15 countries – United States; Germany, United Kingdom, Belgium, France, Netherlands, Sweden, Ireland, Italy, Spain and Switzerland and Hong Kong, Australia, Singapore and Japan.

AT&T claims that its VPLS service, OPT-E-WAN, "enables businesses to link multiple locations – whether across the city or around the world – with the ease and efficiency of a flat ethernet wide area network that can be extended globally."

"OPT-E-WAN provides global users with a new level of choices for establishing virtual LAN or WAN connections, as well as complementing their existing VPN infrastructure. Customers are able to add OPT-E-WAN connectivity to support their emerging high bandwidth applications," said Sanford Brown, vice president, AT&T connectivity and metro network services. "Because it uses standard ethernet interfaces, OPT-E-WAN can be configured easily to meet customer needs regardless of network configuration."

Technology

Nokia Siemens claims first LTE- Advanced demo

Nokia Siemens Networks claims to have successfully demonstrated the relaying technology proposed for LTE-Advanced, the future evolution of 3G wireless broadband that promises to deliver wireless broadband connections at up to 1Gbps.

Nokia Siemens said the demonstration, at its research facilities in Germany, "illustrates how advances to relaying technology can further improve the quality and coverage consistency of a network at the cell edge – where users are furthest from the mobile broadband base station."

Relaying technology will be a feature of the, currently evolving, LTE-A standard. It means that cellular base stations relay signals between them to one that has a backhaul link, rather than directly into the backhaul. This enables capacity and speed of the network to be increased.

According to the company, "Relaying technology, which can also be integrated in normal base station platforms, is cost efficient and easy to deploy as it does not require additional backhaul. The demonstration of LTE Advanced means operators can plan their LTE network investments knowing that the already best-in-class LTE radio performance, including cell edge data rates, can be further improved and that the technological development path for the next stage of LTE is secure and future-proof."

Nokia Siemens Networks announced last month that it was shipping Long Term Evolution (LTE) compatible base station hardware which will need only a software upgrade (available from the second half of 2009) to achieve full LTE functionality. The company also said that by the end of 2008 it would be delivering the new LTE-ready hardware to more than 10 major mobile operators in Europe, Asia and North America.

It also claimed to be conducting LTE trials in operators' live network environments in preparation for the expected launch of commercial networks in 2010. Beyond that, the company says it "is already working on the next step of radio evolution called LTE-Advanced which is further enhancing LTE capabilities towards the data rate of 1Gbps."

The company's CTO, Stephan Scholz, said: "LTE Advanced is the next step in the evolutionary development of LTE technology. Nokia Siemens Networks performs extensive research activities for LTE-Advanced in developing this important technology which will be decisive to our customers in the future."

LTE-Advanced is currently being studied by 3GPP for Release 10 and will be submitted towards ITU-R as the 3GPP Radio Interface Technology proposal. Standardisation is expected sometime in 2011.

NGN IMS Forum says IMS ready for prime time

The NGN IMS Forum has released its second IMS Report Card, claiming it "directly addresses the confusion and misinformation regarding IMS and NGN services to present a testimony to the readiness of the technology."

According to the Forum, "The IMS Report Card provides factual information based on results from the five IMS Forum Plugfests conducted to date at the UNH-IOL and clarifies the state of IMS as a technology and framework."

The Forum's chairman and president, Michael Khalilian, said: "We can speak with confidence that IMS is moving forward rapidly. Early, conflicting information from vendors and service providers (SPs), both in favour of and challenging the technology, have blurred and complicated the understanding of IMS.

"We have the facts about IMS and NGN, and with each new Plugfest the list of standards-compliant and interoperable IMS services that are ready for deployment grows. Objections to the IMS architecture on the grounds of its lack of interoperability, its immaturity, or its complexity are no longer tenable. We have seen multiple vendors quickly integrate and deploy services in a multi-vendor, multiservice service provider IMS network. Many SPs also recognized the value of IMS and are working toward deploying IMS in a modular fashion."

Mobile web site use surges, but usability lacking

Use of mobile Web sites is growing at 10 percent every month, yet mobile sites struggle to deliver an effective experience, according to a new report from research firm, Yankee Group.

The report, *The Best of the Anywhere Web*, is based on a new Yankee Group methodology, its Mobile Web Scorecard. This consists of 25 questions designed to evaluate performance in five key categories: user, device, network, design and effectiveness. It "scores 32 [US] mobile Web sites on a scale of 1 to 100 and finds not one Web site with a passing grade of 70," Yankee says.

Yankee expects mobile to become users' preferred method of accessing the Web in the next 10 years, and says that it therefore: "represents a major opportunity for companies to leverage, especially in tough economic times when other market opportunities may be stagnating."

Carl Howe, a director in Yankee Group's Anywhere Consumer research group and the report's author, said: "Satisfying mobile users isn't rocket science, yet our report finds that the average mobile Web site has significant room for improvement.

"Although most of these Web sites are functional, few provide anything specifically designed for mobile users, instead relying on reformatted desktop content. The average score of 54 shows just what these sites are: average."

Bank of America's score of 67 topped the financial services category with, Yankee says, "its Zen-like simplicity and comprehensive security." Two regional banks - US Bancorp and First Interstate Bank - tied for second place with a score of 65.

"Both sites mirror Bank of America's simplicity but aren't quite as refined in how they help mobile users find their ATMs and branch locations, and perform basic banking functions," Yankee said.

Of online shopping sites, Edmunds, Amazon.com and eBay came out on top. eBay has "created a site for auction addicts with a minimalist design that allows bidders and sellers to track their auctions on the go and not miss any last-minute changes in those transactions."