

13 NOV 1996
MEASAT-Haniff
BINARIANG WANTS TO BE GLOBAL PLAYER, SAYS HANIFF

By: Azman Ujang

KOUROU, (French Guiana), Nov 13 (Bernama) -- Binariang Sdn Bhd, whose second satellite, Measat-2, will be launched here at dawn Malaysian time Thursday, wants to be a global player in the telecommunications and broadcasting industry by acquiring its third satellite, Measat-3, by 1998.

Disclosing this here Wednesday, Binariang chairman Tun Haniff Omar said talks were expected to be started soon on the acquisition of the satellite to complement Measat-1 and Measat-2.

Measat-1 was launched from the Kourou Space Centre here in January and Measat-2, due for lift-off at 6.40am Thursday Malaysian time, were designed to serve the Malaysian and East Asian region, he told a news conference here.

Both the two satellites cost Binariang RM600 million to build, operate and launch.

Haniff said that despite other countries in the region already owning space satellites or being in the process of buying their own in the future, Binariang had been getting enough customers to make business sense of its satellite programme.

Measat-1 was mainly used by Binariang's own sister company, Measat Broadcast, to operate the 30-channel television and radio services, All-Asia Radio and Television Company (Astro) which was launched in September.

"We have signed and are in the process of signing with other customers for Measat-2. But we need Measat-3 to be a global player," Haniff added.

Measat Broadcast has invested over RM500 million for the development of Astro, which is reputed to be the largest all-digital broadcast and production complex in the world.

Astro uses the high-powered Ku-band to deliver its Direct-to-User (DTU) digital satellite broadcast services to areas within its footprint (areas of coverage).

Astro is able to deliver DTU to users with satellite dishes as small as 60cm in diameter, with a 99.9 per cent service rate availability rate.

Haniff described the launch of Measat-2, to be witnessed by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad as a proud achievement for Binariang, which is a relatively newcomer in the industry.

He said Measat-3 would be an even more powerful satellite with bigger footprint.

Binariang senior manager Abdul Halim Abdul Hamid told the news conference that theoretically, one satellite could only cover one-third of the globe, and thus Binariang would need three to cover the world.

He also said that TV stations in Malaysia like RTM and TV-3 which are now depending on foreign-owned satellites to transmit their pictures when their staff are abroad on assignments, such as covering the visit of the prime minister, could hook up to Binariang satellites, depending on the areas they are covering.

He was answering a question about the two stations now being at the mercy of foreign-owned satellites and sometimes facing problems of getting their satellite booking.

A reporter told Abdul Halim that even with only a few hours before the launch of Measat-2, RTM, for example, still could not get its satellite bookings confirmed.

"Yes definitely, Malaysian TV stations can use Measat satellites but

this will have to depend on the footprints," he added.

Meanwhile, Dr Mahathir and other guests from Malaysia invited for the lift-off were today taken on a tour of the Kourou Space Centre, as the clock ticked away for the countdown.

The Malaysian delegation included Information Minister Datuk Mohamed Rahmat, opposition leader Lim Kit Siang, Khazanah Nasional Berhad chairman Tan Sri Sheriff Kassim and Director-General of the Economic Planning Unit Tan Sri Abul Hassan Sulaiman. -- BERNAMA

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