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Measat-Launch
MEASAT-2 READY FOR LIFT-OFF

By: Azman Ujang

KOUROU (French Guiana), Nov 12 (Bernama) -- It's all systems go for the launch into orbit of Measat-2, the second spacecraft in the Malaysia East Asia Satellite system, scheduled at 7.40pm on Wednesday (6.40am Thursday Malaysian time) from the Kourou Space Centre here.

The final countdown for the lift-off, to be witnessed by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and over 200 guests from Malaysia, will begin at 5am Tuesday here with the process of filling liquid hydrogen fuel and oxygen for the boosters of the launch ship, Ariane 4.

"As far as the launch is concerned, everything is running smoothly," said Charles Bigot, the chairman and chief executive officer of Arianespace, the space launcher.

Like Measat-1, which was launched into orbit in January from the same site, Measat-2 is owned by Malaysian telecommunications group Binariang Sdn Bhd.

Both satellites, designed for broadcasting and communications services, were built in Los Angeles by Hughes Space and Communications Company.

They cost Binariang RM600 million to build, operate and launch.

Dr Mahathir had made a brief stopover here en route to Trinidad and Tobago in the Caribbean.

Meanwhile, the situation in Cayenne, 60km from here, has returned to normal after Saturday's unrest when workers and students took to the streets in protest against unsatisfactory conditions in schools in this French territory.

France flew in two platoons of troops to restore order but a general strike is scheduled to be organised by the protestors on Wednesday, the day of the Measat-2 launch.

Measat is Malaysia's first national satellite system, delivering a variety of direct-to-user services to subscribers not only within the country but to the region that it covers, or better known as "footprint" within the space industry.

The "footprint" covers India, Singapore, the Philippines, Thailand, Brunei, Indonesia, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Taiwan, Hong Kong, South China, Australia and Hawaii.

In Malaysia, the immediate beneficiaries are the 30-channel radio services launched in September by the Asia Television and Radio Company (Astro), owned by Measat Broadcasting, which is a unit of Binariang. --

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