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MiTV-Rosman (With Pix) (News Focus)

MiTV CHANGING THE WAY YOU LOOK AT TV - DATUK ROSMAN RIDZWAN

By: Syed Azwan

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 22 (Bernama) -- Changing The Way You Look AT TV, basically this is what MiTV Corporation Sdn Bhd (MiTV), Malaysia's second Pay-TV operator chanted across the nation and promised to those who anxiously-await its coming by end of this year.

When MiTV started to catch the attention and got well covered by the mass media the past few months, it has suddenly become the most-want-to-know thing among Malaysians particularly for 1.1 million households in the Klang Valley and 5.5 million households nationwide.

It is because they already have Astro with 40 plus interesting channels and yet, waiting for MiTV's service to change the way they look at TV.

What will exactly MiTV bring to Malaysian viewers?

In an exclusive interview with Bernama on Friday (Aug 20), its Deputy Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Datuk Rosman Ridzwan, who founded the company at the end of 1998, said that at that time MiTV was operating from Cyberjaya with the initial focus of studying broadband technologies per se.

Further research and development has led MiTV to homegrown technology called Internet Protocol over Ultra High Frequency (IP-o-UHF), which gradually grabbed the attention of businessman Tan Sri Vincent Tan who was with the then Prime Minister, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad when Rosman and his team were giving a presentation on the newly developed IP-o-UHF platform to Dr Mahathir.

In September 2001 Vincent Tan agreed to invest in MiTV to realise the commercialization of the homegrown, IPTV-o-UHF platform, which is the core basis of the MiTV system, network and technology.

MiTV now operates from its home station in the KL Plaza.

"Our focus is more on content variety instead of what Astro already has, this is our primary objective - bringing the difference to subscribers," he told Bernama at his office in KL Plaza, Bukit Bintang here.

The channel variety, interactive service and the subscription fee, which are expected to be lower than Astro's, will be the basic strength of MiTV to gain the market.

Rosman said as promised they had no problem in providing an initial 50 channels to the subscribers.

Everything was progressing smoothly towards this end.

Based on industrial sources and the media there are 5.5 million TV homes (households) and out of that, 1.5 million are Astro subscribers and there will be another four million households left, who have not subscribed to the Pay-TV service.

The remaining four million households not subscribing to Astro will be MiTV's main market focus as a second player in Pay-TV business, while Rosman stated that 200,000 subscribers (Klang Valley) as its break-even point.

"Astro subscribers can have our service as an additional taste to their information and entertainment need because we offer more variety," he said.

It is learnt that with 50 plus channels and later to be increased to about 100 channels, it will allow MiTV to satisfy all Malaysian tastes ranging from entertainment and information to education, through bundle of channels for each of the major vernacular groups and spectrum of international properties.

The new and exciting channels from MiTV coupled with Astro's existing

channels would bring unparalleled choice to those who can afford both services especially the urban communities.

Moving to the interactive service Rosman said some of the services such as E-mail, instant messaging and account management were bundled in as part of the basic flat fee subscription.

Subscribers will also enjoy another service called 'Affordable Transaction' which includes video-on-demand; music-on-demand; games-on-demand; and E-learning-on-demand for those with extra desire.

It means a subscriber may choose to watch whatever item and whenever he wants it. Rosman said the service can be accessed by the end user by just having the MiTV Set-top-box, an Ultra High Frequency (UHF) antenna and television.

"Set-top-box which is in essence a PC-in-a-box comes with the storage capability through the IP packet enables the short-term demand with the network support... users only pay what they use based on transactions they make," he said.

Homegrown innovations and so-called Graphical User Interface (GUI) will further make it easier and add more fun to the user experience while watching MiTV channels.

According to Rosman with IPTV-o-UHF technology it will reduce the cost of content delivery, which is why the subscription fee is expected to be much lower than Astro's.

It is cost-effective management -- leasing the existing infrastructure of service providers such as Celcom and Digi-- it speeds up the process and lessens the expenditures, this of course will affect the quantum of the subscription fee.

So far MiTV had sealed a deal with Celcom by leasing two sites, tower facilities at Bukit Belimbing, Balakong and Damansara in the first phase for an initial three years.

This will cover areas such Kajang, Semenyih, Cheras, Damansara, Kepong and Batu and the second phase of expansion would include another 20 sites within the next six months.

MiTV is not a digital TV; in fact it utilizes the Digital Video Broadcasting Terrestrial (DVBT) Standard to deliver the service through the Internet Protocol (IP) packet.

It is also user-friendly and easy to set up with no complex installation, the service is plug-n-play in nature but the subscribers must pay a certain amount of money for the set-top-box (decoder).

"The decoder price is still under discussion, we will announce it in a couple of months," he said.

It seems that subscribers will be enticed with MiTV's guarantee that they won't have any problem with reception when it is raining due to its DVBT and IPTV-o-UHF signals.

Upon subscribing, customers will be provided with the conditional access card, a safe smart card with the essential ability to counter hackers before reaching the systems.

MiTV will roll out by December for the Klang Valley and is expected to extend to the northern region in six months and subsequently within 18 months, it will cover the entire country including Sabah and Sarawak.

All in all, as the viewers certainly are waiting and hoping that everything will be OK -- low subscription fee, quality presentation, channels variety and interactive services; e-learning-on-demand, music-on-demand.

Last but not least according to Rosman MiTV plans to conduct the payment by Pre-Paid and they will announce the subscription fee rate soon.

The final decision will be with us -- subscribe to MiTV or Astro or both?

-- BERNAMA
SYZ KHY AAM