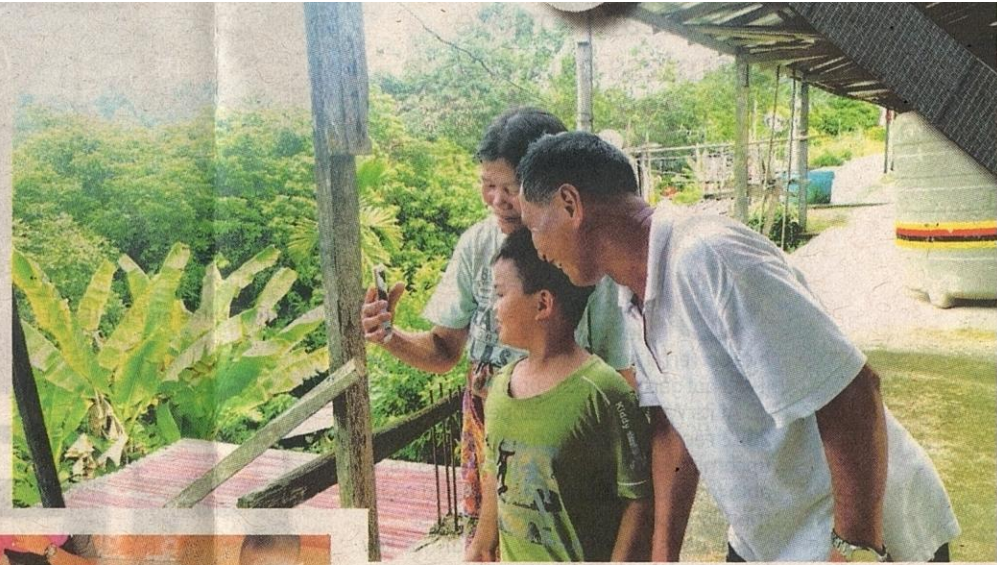


Faster Internet for rural areas

The Measat-3d satellite, to be launched on June 23, will connect millions to high-speed broadband, writes **Nur Zarina Othman**



The Connectme Now satellite broadband service will link 10,000 sites in the next three years to serve more than two million people in remote areas.

REPLICAS of satellites welcomed us as we entered Malaysia's satellite operator Measat's facility in Cyberjaya ahead of the launch of its latest, most comprehensive and complex satellite in its fleet to date — Measat-3d.

Built by Airbus Defence and Space, the new satellite will co-locate with Measat-3a and Measat-3b at the 91.5 degrees East orbital slot. It will replace Measat's old capacity and build resilience in its current fleet, providing redundancy and additional capacity for video distribution in the Asia Pacific region as well as providing satellite broadband to areas with limited or no terrestrial network throughout Malaysia.

The Measat-1 and Measat-2 were launched in 1996, followed by Measat-3 in 2006, Measat-3a in 2009 and Measat-3b in 2014.

lite broadband service.

Measat is proud to support the government's initiatives, including the Jalinan Digital Negara (Jendela) plan to close the digital connectivity gap, by expanding high-speed Internet coverage in under-connected rural areas.

"With better access to the Internet, the rakyat will be able to derive socioeconomic benefits, such as participating in e-commerce and digital learning. We aim to fill the broadband gap in locations without 4G, DNB's 5G mobile or fibre coverage in Malaysia," said Yau.

The Connectme Now will link 10,000 sites in the next three years to serve more than two million people in remote areas that currently have no or limited access to high-speed broadband Internet.

The Ariane 5 rocket, which is carrying Measat-3d, will launch from Europe's Guiana Space Centre spaceport in Kourou, French Guiana on June 23. It is targeting the one-hour-and-forty-minute window that opens at 5.03pm.

BROADCASTING BREAKTHROUGH

The multi-mission Eurostar 3000 communications satellite aims to restore unrivalled in-orbit redundancy and expansion capacity for Astro's Direct-to-Home (DTH) service together with broadcasting and telecommunications services.

Touring the facility with us and answering our queries was Measat

chief operating officer Yau Chyong Lim.

"In the realm of communications technology, infrastructure capacity and usage optimisation are firmly interconnected. As satellite technology continues to advance, we will be able to support greater bandwidth demands, which in turn becomes a catalyst for new applications, such as IR4.0 and the Internet of Things," Yau said.

Bound for geostationary orbit, the Measat-3d is equipped with conventional C and Ku-Band capacity, and will be home to one of the largest video neighbourhoods in Asia, ensuring growth and service continuity for the world's leading broad-

casters and DTH satellite television in over 20 million households across Malaysia, Indonesia and India. The current 30 Mbps download speed will be enhanced to 100 Mbps, enabling users to stream data-heavy content such as 4K/8K videos.

GAME-CHANGING BROADBAND

The satellite also incorporates a Ka-band high throughput satellite (HTS) payload, the largest HTS payload exclusively reserved for local demand in Malaysia. This will increase Measat's broadband capacity throughput tenfold from 3Gbps to 30Gbps. This allows high-speed broadband access even in areas with limited or no terrestrial connectivity, urban and suburban areas.

"As an interconnected society, we must ensure that these exciting technologies are not limited to densely populated urban areas, where there are fewer physical and cost barriers to introducing new technologies," Yau said, adding that with the launch of Measat-3d, Malaysians in hard-to-reach rural villages could stay connected via Measat's Connectme Now satel-

"The pandemic has fast-tracked the adoption of technology and the use of broadband for education, economic activity and social interaction. Therefore, we have initiated a series of future satellite initiatives to improve broadband services and cellular backhaul in the next three to five years, to accelerate the formation of a digitally inclusive society."

To date, Measat has rolled out more than 3,000 Connectme Now sites nationwide, with a majority in the remote areas of Sabah and Sarawak. In addition, other telecommunications providers can also tap on the new satellite to offer data, voice and video services to the last three to five per cent of the population not yet covered by fibre connectivity or wireless broadband.

"On a wider scale, with our immediate targets within Malaysia clearly in sight, we intend to replicate and grow the Connectme service regionally in the long term. To support this growth, we need to significantly expand our satellite broadband capacity with a strategy that includes geostationary and non-geostationary satellites," added Yau.

To optimise service capacity, the RM1.2 billion Measat-3d is designed with an estimated lifespan of 18 years.

*Yau Chyong
Lim*

