

DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY IS EVOLVING AS MARITIME OPERATORS DEMAND MORE FROM SATCOM SYSTEMS

Tuesday, November 30, 2021

The business of digital communication is changing and digital service providers need to keep pace in order to stay relevant and meet customer needs.

Added value and comprehensive service are now the expectation as the shipping industry's use of digital communication matures and operators require more from their VSAT connection. And essential back-up systems can also work harder to protect business continuity.

Speaking at a recent offshore industry conference, Nabil Ben Soussia, CEO Asia, Middle East & CIS at IEC Telecom Group, said: "Today we see far fewer ships operating just with a single line of communication. For example, it's now common practice to equip an onboard network with one or two back-up lines. In fact, VSAT packages now routinely include L-Band along with any Ka or Ku offer. The business is changing and now, more than ever, digital service providers need to keep up with the pace."

Speaking alongside him, Antti Syrjanen, VP Portfolio Management at Thuraya, which partners with IEC Telecom on many maritime services, said:

"Thuraya's next generation program is a comprehensive program that cover land, sea and air connectivity and targets key enterprises in the transportation, logistics, energy, utilities and maritime sectors across Europe, Africa and the Middle East as well as the fast growing Asia Pacific region. Its maritime and energy IoT solutions are ideal for companies that seek flawless and effective management of their large fleets or complex infrastructure and assets".

Mr Ben Soussia pointed out that the development of specific maritime software is progressing at speed, allowing full customisation of ship and fleet connectivity. He commented: "Vessel operators want to customise their satcom network to maximise what they do with it. The maritime industry requires optimised software capable of operating seamlessly over VSAT and back-up systems as well. Business continuity is essential, otherwise efforts invested into digitalisation could be wasted."

Between them, IEC telecom and Thuraya are able to meet many of the diverse needs of the maritime industry – from small vessels and workboats, to fishing fleets and ocean-going ships, to offshore oil and gas platforms – making them well-placed to identify changing requirements and anticipate new developments.

The march towards digitalisation, fast-tracked by the pandemic which drove businesses to find new ways of operating, is increasing the data-driven environment. It is predicted that by 2025 almost 50% of data will be stored in the cloud, while about 30% of data generated will be consumed in real-time.

High tech ships and offshore installations are now offices at sea and the associated requirements for managing large volumes of critical data via reliable connectivity are increasing exponentially. With all this reliance on data transfer and vessel monitoring, 24/7 connectivity is now expected. Systems with automated failure and robust back up are therefore essential.

Mr Ben Soussia explains: "Business continuity is critical now whatever the location or local conditions. Digital systems need to be capable of operating seamlessly over GSM and satcom. With the amount of data needing to be recorded and transferred seamlessly between ship and shore, often in real time, a vessel cannot just drop down to email-only mode if the primary network goes down. It is therefore imperative to ensure that vital software services can be delivered both over VSAT and back-up systems so that, when one loses connectivity, the other takes over without breaking connection or losing important data."

Over the past five years, IEC Telecom has invested in the development of specialised applications optimised for the low-bandwidth environment. In addition to enhanced compression, most of its applications are pre-set to resume data transfer from the moment of interruption in case of any signal loss, thereby saving data, time and money. And Mr Ben Soussia predicts that, as we move towards the potential for full vessel automation, the number of business-critical applications will increase exponentially since all major processes related to vessel management will need to be carried out virtually.

Mr Ben Soussia comments: "Having a back-up system is not a new concept. What is new is the ability to use these systems for important operational functions. Thanks to the new generation of maritime software, this is now a reality and one that will become increasingly important over coming years."

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About IEC Telecom:

IEC Telecom Group is one of the leading international providers of satellite communications services. Renowned for supplying high quality satcom solutions for more than 25 years, IEC Telecom delivers efficient end-to-end voice and data services when and where it matters most.

IEC Telecom enables digitalization for the maritime industry as well as remote units on land, where GSM coverage is not available. For urban networks, the satcom service provider offers a powerful satellite back up to ensure the business continuity of customer enterprises. IEC Telecom's portfolio includes a wide range of satellite products (from handset to VSAT services), solutions, and value-added services.

IEC Telecom has long-standing business relationships with all the key satellite operators and is in the unique position to support organisations with global operations as well as offer a wide variety of plans for area-by-area use to regional customers.

IEC Telecom Group has offices across eight countries: Denmark, France, Kazakhstan, Norway, Singapore, Sweden, Turkey, and UAE.

For more information, browse our website: www.iec-telecom.com

About Thuraya:

Thuraya, is the mobile satellite services subsidiary of the UAE-based Al Yah Satellite Communications Company P.J.S.C. (Yahsat), which is a public company listed on the Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange (ADX) and a subsidiary of Mubadala Investment Company PJSC. In 2020, Yahsat commenced construction of Thuraya 4-NGS, the next generation telecommunications system, which is due to be in service by 2024.

Established in 1997, Thuraya offers innovative communications solutions to a variety of sectors including maritime, energy, government, broadcast media, military, aerospace and humanitarian NGO. Thuraya's superior network enables clear communications and uninterrupted coverage across two-thirds of the globe by MSS, global VSAT coverage and around the world through its unique GSM roaming capabilities. The company's diverse range of technologically advanced and dependable mobile satellite handsets and broadband devices provide ease of use, value, quality and efficiency. Through relevant partnerships, Thuraya stays ahead by delivering solutions and supporting applications that meet the rapidly transforming nature of market demands. Thuraya remains committed to keeping everyone within reach in any circumstance by making accessible the essential tools required for vital connectivity.

For more information, visit www.thuraya.com ; Follow us on Twitter: @ThurayaTelecom

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