

A MOMENTARY CONCESSION

The new Thaicom CEO wants to diversify from satellite business to digital platforms and solutions via partnerships. **B4**

New Thaicom chief to set out future plans

He says his focus is on digital platforms

KOMSAN TORTERMVASANA

Patompob Suwansiri, newly appointed chief executive of satellite service operator Thaicom Plc, has vowed to continue pursuing business diversification by capitalising on its assets and forging partnerships to provide space-air-ground smart solutions as it aims to create long-term revenues beyond its satellite business.

Mr Patompob began his leadership role at Thaicom on Jan 1, succeeding Anant Kaewruamvongs, who retired. Before being promoted, he served as acting deputy chief executive and chief commercial officer at Thaicom, where he has worked for three decades.

Mr Patompob said 90% of Thaicom's revenue is derived from satellite Thaicom to pursuing businesses linked with the space economy, which it said is still a blue ocean for investment in line with tech advancement.

Mr Anant said during his recent farewell meeting with the press the expiration of Thaicom's concession should not disrupt the company, but satellite business has been disrupted by the development of new technologies.

After the concession expired, Thaicom handed over Thaicom 4 and 6 satellites and related assets, such as the satellite control system, to the Digital Economy and Society Ministry for further operation.

Thaicom still operates the Thaicom 7 and 8 satellites under a single licence from the National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission, which requires a 5.75% licence fee payment.

This differs from the Thaicom 4 and 6 satellites that required a concession under a build-transfer-operate agreement.

Thaicom has been diversifying its

business, and 50% of its earnings come from the international market.

"The company needs to focus on developing digital platforms and solutions to create further growth for the firm," he said.

"Thaicom has financial stability with around 3 billion baht in cash flow and no debt," said Mr Patompob.

He said his mission is to strengthen the company's business ecosystem and generate new growth opportunities through technology and innovation.

Thaicom faces business challenges after its 30-year satellite operating concession ended in September 2021, requiring the company to think about new opportunities.

Mr Patompob said the company's major strategic plans need to continue, but some new businesses need to be rolled out to capitalise on its existing assets and create new options.

He expects to officially announce his vision for the company's new missions in early 2022.

The existing strategic plan commits business portfolio into digital solutions over the past couple of years in order to secure more revenue streams.

The company touted space-air-ground smart solutions as one of its key business footprints.

Thaicom is diving into the drone business through the development of flight control systems, unmanned aerial vehicles, satellite data analytic services, digital platforms for drones as a service, as well as drone spraying services.

The company is seeking partners through a consortium to discuss with satellite makers building a new broadband internet satellite called a software-defined satellite (SDS).

SDS can support flexible and fine-grained networks, improve collaboration between satellites and the compatibility of heterogeneous space systems, as well as reduce costs.

Thaicom is also looking to engage in low-earth orbit satellite business. The advantage of the lower orbit is lower latency, which offers access to high-speed internet services.



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PATOMPOB SUWANSIRI
Chief executive, Thaicom