

AIS prepares for industry disruption



From left, AIS president Hui Weng Cheong, AIS chief executive Somchai Lertsutiwong, AIS board of directors chairman Kan Trakulhoon and executive vice-president for wireless marketing Prathana Leelapanang at AIS Vision 2017, where the company's strategies for the year were outlined.

IoT to transform communications

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Advanced Info Service (AIS) has identified digital communication infrastructure as a key investment area in 2017 and has allocated a budget of 40 billion baht towards striving to ride the next wave of digital growth emerging from the Internet of Things (IoT).

The company has also set aside an additional 5 billion baht to enhance digital services and develop enterprise-level mobile applications to accommodate the state's push to create a value-based economy, called Thailand 4.0.

AIS announced it will aggressively promote its fibre-optic broadband service this year (as part of the 5-billion-baht investment budget) after successfully securing HBO Asia's TV channels for an undisclosed amount following TrueVisions' failure to renew a content distribution agreement with the US studio.

"This year will be the year of IoT changing the way we live and work," said AIS chief executive Somchai Lertsutiwong. "To bolster our leadership position, we expect to see our revenue grow by 4-5% this year, up from 1.6% in 2016, driven mainly by the expected surge in demand for data communications."

Investment in digital communication infrastructure includes both wireless and fibre-optic broadband networks and

super-high-speed WiFi.

Digital services, meanwhile, include digital video entertainment production through partnerships with Fox, HBO and the National Basketball Association.

AIS recently introduced narrow-band IoT to enable a wide range of devices and services to be connected through cellular bands.

Mr Somchai said AIS witnessed a big leap in the development of Thailand's telecom infrastructure last year, which resulted in full-scale digital literacy.

He said mobile data usage will surge by 300% this year, thanks to an expected commercial take-up of IoT, or machine-to-machine communication.

AIS customers consumed an average of 3.5 gigabytes per month last year, up from 2GB a month in 2015.

"We expect average consumption to reach 5-6GB per month in 2017, driven by better quality networks and changing digital consumer lifestyles," Mr Somchai said yesterday at AIS Vision 2017 under the theme of Digital for Thais.

Mr Somchai said he believes smartphone users will reach 70 million by 2025 and 20 million IoT devices will be connected by 2025.

He said AIS plans to launch HBO movie programmes by March.

"We're confident that our fibre broadband service will get a boost after our HBO channels are launched," he said.

AIS has 350,000 fibre-optic broadband customers, representing 4% of the local home broadband internet market.

"We aim to have 700,000 customers by year-end," Mr Somchai said.