TAKING MALAYSIA **BEYOND** THE STARS

Ananda (third from right) and then Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad (centre) commemorating the launch of Measat-1.

EVERY nation's progress is shaped by individuals who dare to think beyond limits.

For Malaysia, one of those individuals is a man whose vision brought the skies closer, transforming how the nation connects, communicates and grows.

Mention Ananda Krishnan Tatparanandam to the average Malaysian and many will recognise him as the force behind market-leading telecommunications and broadcasting giants Maxis and Astro.

Yet, his role in establishing Measat Global Bhd (Measat), a satellite solutions provider, reveals an even deeper legacy of innovation.

Fondly known as "Mr Krishnan" by the Measat team, he is celebrated for his visionary foresight.

Ananda, a private business tycoon, passed away on Nov 28 last year at the age of 86.

His demise marks the end of an era but leaves behind a profound legacy of progress and innovation.

In the 1990s, the world witnessed a communications revolution, with telecommunications and broadcasting industries expanding at an unprecedented pace.

At home, Malaysia's Vision 2020, championed by then Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, aimed to elevate the country's infrastructure to support its ambitious goals.

Ananda, often referred to as AK, saw satellites as the key to unlocking Malaysia's potential.

By establishing a locally owned satellite network, he envisioned that the country could significantly benefit from bridging digital divides, enhancing its communication infrastructure, improving national security and reducing reliance on foreign technology.

With satellite broadcasting, terrestrial coverage limitations in remote areas were overcome.

Now, RTM and other broadcasters could reach Malaysians who previously did not have television and radio services. The satellites also enabled digital broadcasting, allowing more channels and content to go on the air.

His vision was bold, yet deeply rooted in empowering the nation to thrive in a connected future.

With a history of successful ventures and a trusted reputation among Malaysia's leadership, Ananda, also known for his philanthropy, gained support from both government and private stakeholders.

His guidance and vision enabled Measat to navigate technical and regulatory challenges, from securing orbital slots to launching satellites. He pioneered Malaysia's use of Ku-Band frequencies in the high-rainfall South-East Asia region, a feat once thought impossible in the satellite industry.

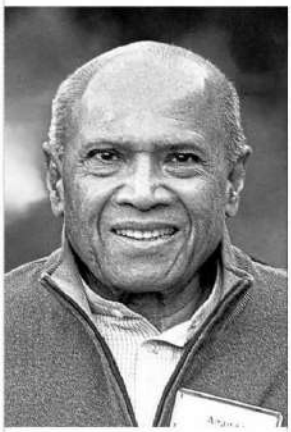
Today, Measat is more than a company; it is a symbol of Malaysia's aspiration to lead in digital connectivity.

It stands as a footprint of Ananda's foresight and enduring impact, ensuring his contributions will continue to shape the nation for generations to come.

With a fully Malaysian team, its people are the nation's pride.

Measat's early years

In its early years, Measat's satellite services were provided by Binariang, a company founded in 1992 to bring together a team of experts to develop and launch Malaysia's first satellite communications system.



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In 1996, the Malaysia East Asia Satellite (Measat)-1 (M1) and Measat-2 (M2) satellites were launched, opening the door to reliable telephone, data and broadcast services for Malaysia.

Initially, Measat operated from a purpose-built satellite control facility on Gunung Raya in Langkawi. M1 and M2 provided satellite services across the Asia Pacific via C-band services and Direct-To-Home (DTH) quality Ku-band coverage designed to cut through high tropical rainfall.

These satellites led to a rapid increase in telecommunications and broadcasting infrastructure throughout the country.

As the business grew, Measat became an independent entity in 1998, having previously operated as a business unit under Maxis.

In 2005, the satellite operations base moved from Langkawi to Cyberjaya, where Measat consolidated its business and technical operations into the state-of-the-art Measat Teleport and Broadcast Centre (MTBC) – a national key-point facility housing the primary Telemetry, Tracking and Command (TT&C) centre for Measat's fleet of satellites.

From the Klang Valley, Measat continues to support the development of Malaysia's communications infrastructure, serving the region's leading telecommunications companies and broadcasters.

With its fleet, Measat offers a wide range of satellite applications, including DTH television, satellite news gathering (SNG), very small aperture terminal services, remote telephony, broadcast distribution, digital audio broadcast, video services (including video playout, turnaround and occasional usage services) and telecommunications services such as co-location and disaster recovery.

Expanding horizons

By the mid-2000s, Ananda's vision for Measat was to establish it as one of Asia Pacific's top three satellite operators and the operator of choice for Malaysia's telecommunications and media industries.

The goal was to support Asean's strongest DTH television networks and host one of the top three video distribution neighbourhoods in the region, while building a solid reputation among Asian, European and North American clients.

The launch of the Measat-3 and Measat-3a satellites in 2006 and 2009 respectively, expanded Measat's reach across Asia, Australia, Africa and southern Europe, with its powerful C-band beam capable of reaching up to 100 countries. Today, Measat's footprint covers 130 countries, representing 80% of the world's population.

In the years that followed, the company continued to introduce new capabilities, such as launching the first Asia-Pacific High-Definition Video Channel on Measat-3 in 2007.

In 2011, the Measat-5 High Throughput Satellite (HTS) came into service to support Malaysia's broadband initiatives, offering the largest HTS capacity for Malaysia at the time.

This was followed by the addition of Measat-3b to the fleet in 2014, creating Asia's most robust DTH satellite neighbourhood at the 91.5° East hotslot.

By 2022, the launch of Measat-3d brought the total number of satellites launched and operated to eight, representing nearly US$2bil in Ananda's private funding across 30 years to maintain Malaysia's position as a leading regional satellite operator.

Forging global partnerships

As Measat expanded its fleet of satellites and service offerings, it also gained industry recognition, opening doors to new opportunities for international collaboration.

In 2008, Measat's space systems development senior vice- president Dr Ali R Ebadi was elected chairman of the International Telecommunications Union's Radio Regulations Board.

In 2013, Azercosmos, Azerbaijan's national satellite operator, engaged Measat to develop Azerbaijan's satellite capabilities and local talent – a nod to Measat's abilities.

This successful collaboration enabled Azercosmos to leverage Measat's expertise in satellite communications and operations, helping achieve their business and national goals with the launch of Azerbaijan's first satellite, Azerspace-1.

With the evolution of business targets, today, Azercosmos is the operator of multiple satellites on their own merit.

Stay tuned to StarBiz7 next week to find out how Ananda's vision for Measat continues to drive Malaysian technological progress and national goals.