

GMM TIES UP DTV, MCOT FOR FREE HDTV

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THE NATION

Leading entertainment firm GMM Grammy, Thaicom's satellite dish set provider DTV Service, and MCOT have tied up to launch satellite-based free-to-air high definition TV (HDTV) programmes to DTV satellite-dish customers, beginning with the Euro 2012 soccer season and other programmes from GMM.

They announced the partnership yesterday.

DTV bought these HDTV programmes from GMM in a Bt75-million deal, under a one-year contract.

DTV users need to buy DTV's HDTV set-top box each costing Bt4,990 to receive these free high-definition programmes.

Thaicom chief executive officer Suphajeer Suthumpun said DTV expected to sell 500,000 HDTV set-top boxes within two years.

The DTV HDTV set-top box users will be able to view five satellite channels, of which two will show Euro 2012 matches and variety programmes, two will show GMM sport programmes, and the fifth one is for documentary programmes.

As Thaicom 5 satellite's broad-

casting transponder capacity has been fully utilised, GMM has to rent one of two Thaicom 5 satellite transponders – already leased by MCOT – from MCOT to air these HDTV programmes. MCOT has leased two transponders from Thaicom to prepare to air its own programmes but has yet to utilise them. MCOT reportedly pays Bt100 million a year to Thaicom to lease these two transponders, while GMM reportedly will pay Bt80 million a year to MCOT for renting one of these two transponders to air its HDTV programmes.

GMM chairman Paiboon Damrongchaitam said that when Thaicom launches Thaicom 6 broadcasting satellite next year, GMM would switch from MCOT to lease the Thaicom 6 satellite transponders instead.

DTV Service, a wholly owned subsidiary of Thaicom, provides satellite TV products and service. Its yellow dish receives Ku-band satellite TV programmes of more than 40 channels on both free-to-air television programmes with no monthly fee and pay-per-view programmes. DTV sold 1.5 million conventional set-top boxes for receiving these programmes.

DTV general manager Pramote Boonnumsak expects that the number of DTV dish users will reach 1.8 million this year.

GMM won the rights to broadcast the Euro 2012 tournament in Thailand, which will be run from June 8 to July 1. Its satellite-TV firm GMM Z has already partnered with TV3 to air the event.