

Telekom Malaysia leads consortium to build undersea cable to link with US

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HONG KONG, June 1, 2006 (AFP) -

Telekom Malaysia said Thursday it has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with seven Asian partners to build an undersea broadband cable system linking Southeast Asia with the United States.

Malaysia's largest telecom company said the cable system will route between Malaysia and the US through Hong Kong, the Philippines, Guam and Hawaii, with branches into Singapore, Thailand, Brunei Darussalam and Vietnam.

Baharum Salleh, chief operating officer for Telekom Malaysia which leads the consortium, said the system is aimed to support the burgeoning demand for voice, IP/data and video traffic between Southeast Asia and the US.

"We see the big broadband potential in these countries," he said in Hong Kong. "By 2008, we would not have sufficient capacity to connect Malaysia to the internet."

He expects to see at least more than 20 percent growth in broadband traffic for Malaysia.

The 20,000 kilometer-long cable (12,400 mile), to be known as **Asia-America Gateway**, will be completed in early 2008 with a minimum design capacity of 1.28 terabits.

The consortium includes REACH of Hong Kong, CAT Telecom of Thailand, Philippines' PLDT, Singapore's StarHub, Vietnam's VNPT and AiTi of Brunei Darussalam.

The company said the system has the potential to extend capacity to other locations in the Northeast and Southeast Asia, India, Australia, Africa and Europe as it is designed to provide a high degree of inter-connectivity with existing and planned high bandwidth systems.

Salleh said the company expects to expand the network and will have one or two more partners.

No financial details were provided.