

TELECOMMUNICATION

NBTC and BMA subsidising cable burial



Mr Takorn, right, wearing a yellow tie, at Soi Ari 1. The NBTC and the BMA are progressing with the underground conduit cable project.

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The telecom regulator and Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) have agreed to partly subsidise the underground cable conduit project in Bangkok and surrounding provinces to expedite the scheme's roll-out and fend off exorbitant rental fees.

The move came after a recent meeting between the National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC) and BMA.

The project's construction cost is expected to reach 20 billion baht, according to City Hall's business arm Krungthep Thanakom (KT), which received approval from the National Digital Economy and Society Committee (NDESC) to move ahead with the project.

Through the subsidy, the rental fee for the conduit would be 3,000-4,000 baht per kilometre per month, said NBTC secretary-general Takorn Tantasith.

Mr Takorn said the resolution on the subsidy would be formally forwarded by KT to the NBTC for approval and tabled for an NDESC meeting.

"The government is likely to support the resolution, which will accelerate planned construction of the project," he said.

The NBTC has asked state telecom enterprise TOT to map out the existing underground conduits so the construction of KT's conduit project can be planned, said Mr Takorn.

TOT has more than 200 kilometres of underground conduits in Bangkok. The KT project could extend from the lines TOT operates.

TOT's conduit rental rate is 9,000 baht per km per month.

He said KT, which was granted a 15-year licence as a telecom network operator by the NBTC, must pay for part of the cost and operate underground conduits in line with Section 35 of the Telecom Business Act.

The legislation stipulates NBTC's licensees have to invest in and operate the infrastructure themselves.

KT earlier wrote a request for proposal (RFP) to telecom operators to gauge their demand for renting conduits.

KT has indicated 13 operators expressed interest in renting the conduits, based on the RFP.

All the telecom companies have the right to rent the conduits at fair rental rates, said Mr Takorn.

KT has submitted a reference price for the construction cost to the NBTC. The regulator is responsible for approving the rental fee rates.

The NBTC aims to reorganise existing overhead cables by putting them into overhead pipes on eight roads in Bangkok for a combined 37.7km by this year.