

STEP ON ITTOT is told to map out existing underground cable conduits spanning more than 2,000km in Bangkok by early May. **B3****TECHNOLOGY**

TOT told to map conduits



Installation of underground cable conduits spanning 52km is due this year.

PATTARAPONG
CHATPATTARASILL

Required for BMA's underground plans

KOMSAN TORTERMVASANA

State telecom enterprise TOT has been ordered to map out existing underground cable conduits spanning more than 2,000 kilometres in Bangkok by early May so that a new project does not overlap, says Digital Economy and Society (DES) Minister Buddhipongse Punnakanta.

Mr Buddhipongse said details of the TOT's existing conduits will be discussed with the National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC).

The new conduit project's plan will then be brought to the National Digital Economy and Society Committee (NDESC), chaired by Deputy Prime

Minister Prawit Wongsuwon, for discussion, he said.

"If the proposed plan is clear and agreed upon by related parties, the construction of conduits will be done at a reduced cost," Mr Buddhipongse said.

He said TOT senior executive vice-president Morakot Thienmontree recently presented details of TOT's existing conduits in the capital and the surrounding provinces to him. The conduit project has gradually been developed over the past decade.

TOT said some parts of its conduits are under roads because of road expansions. These make up 2,000km in total length.

The TOT conduits beneath roads may have to be fixed and reused, and the new underground conduit project will be carried out by the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA), which may need only to expand on TOT's work, Mr Buddhipongse said.

"Renovating TOT conduits for use would also make it more likely that the conduit rental fee, which will be collected from the telecom and broadcasting operators, would not be costly," he said, adding that the ministry wants to see progress on the project before the end of this quarter.

Last year, the NDESC cleared the BMA to proceed with the underground cable project through business arm Krungthep Thanakom (KT) to beautify Bangkok's landscape and ensure safety.

KT, which was granted a 15-year licence as a telecom network operator by the NBTC, is obliged to bear some investment cost and operate the project independently, based on Section 35 of the Telecom Business Act, which governs practice, investment, telecom infrastructure and conduit construction.

The project is expected to cost 20 billion baht, according to KT's estimate.

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The NBTC and the BMA recently held a meeting and agreed to subsidise some parts of the rental fee for telecom and broadcasting operators, making a rental fee of 3,000-4,000 baht per km per month possible.

TOT provides underground conduits for telecom and broadcasting operators to rent for 8,000 baht per km per month.

The NBTC, the BMA and the Metropolitan Electricity Authority plan for the underground cables to span 150km, of which 27km was completed in 2019. Cable conduits spanning 52km are to be put underground this year.