

## CITY

# Subsidy for underground cable project

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State funds will be used to subsidise internet service providers to place roadside telecom and broadcast cables underground in Bangkok, said Digital Economy and Society Minister Chaiwut Thanakamanusorn.

Mr Chaiwut said he and the National Telecom Plc (NT) will meet Bangkok governor Chadchart Sittipunt on July 4 to discuss the underground cable project which has run into funding challenges. The minister explained the Krungthep Thanakom Co, a state enterprise under the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration, has taken charge of the underground cable project. However, work has stalled due to the hefty cost of the project estimated at 20 billion baht.

The concern was that if the internet service providers were to wholly absorb the cost of laying cables underground, the cost of internet services would go up.

Mr Chaiwut said the government will secure funds to help subsidise the operation with the NT supervising the project expected for completion within three to four years.

The funds might come from the National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC) or the Digital Economy Fund, he said.

Mr Chaiwut noted underground cables cannot be laid in some parts of the capital so some roadside cables will remain although new wiring will be installed to replace the bundled cables which pose a safety risk and are an eyesore.

However, the rewiring requires the cooperation of the NBTC, the Metropolitan Electricity Authority and the Telecommunications Association of Thailand of which the internet service provider companies are members, he said. The minister added that underground cabling is being done along main roads and streets in business areas before other parts of the city.