

UPWARD BOUNDNational Telecom is creating a gateway station for a British broadband satellite internet provider to diversify revenue. **3**

NT prepares gateway station for LEO satellites

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National Telecom (NT) is developing a gateway station in Ubon Ratchathani for low-Earth orbit (LEO) satellites operated by OneWeb, a UK broadband satellite internet service provider, as part of a plan to increase its long-term revenue stream in the satellite tech frontier.

The gateway station, located at NT's Sirindhorn satellite station, is expected to be completed in eight months.

OneWeb has sent 428 satellites into orbit, or 66% of the 648-satellite constellation planned by the firm to provide satellite internet services globally. The remaining satellites are expected to be deployed by year-end.

Somyot Tanapirunthorn, senior executive vice-president for marketing at NT, said the Thai station is one of OneWeb's more than 40 gateways around the world.

The gateway station will beam signals via multiple satellites to support unlimited telecommunication, he said.

This gateway station is being developed within a 40,000-square-metre area under a project called "OneWeb Satellite Network Portal Site Hosting Services".

It is a co-investment project, with NT responsible for constructing all related components for the gateway stations, including a group of LEO satellite dishes, Mr Somyot said.

NT is holding talks with OneWeb to install gateway servers and routers at the location to manage the satellite network, he said.

OneWeb aims to provide satellite internet services through its global LEO satellite communication network covering Asean in the second quarter of next year.

NT is in the process of submitting a licence with the National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission

to be a satellite gateway business for foreign satellites.

NT and OneWeb are also in talks about a marketing scheme for the satellite internet service, with NT aiming to serve as a service retailer for the OneWeb satellite network in Thailand.

The talks with OneWeb began a few years ago through CAT Telecom before it merged with TOT to become NT in 2021, said Mr Somyot.

This cooperation is separate from talks between TOT and American spacecraft manufacturer SpaceX on the subject of an LEO satellite business partnership. The TOT project has yet to make progress.

NT was assigned to manage and control the Thaicom 4 and 6 satellites, which were handed over by SET-listed Thaicom after its concession expired in September last year.

In 2020, TOT signed a memorandum of understanding agreement with mu Space and Advanced Technology, a local satellite and space tech firm, to explore satellite business opportunities, especially satellite ground infrastructure, gateway systems, data centres and digital platforms for space tech in connection with LEO satellites, according to a source in NT who requested anonymity.

The partnership is viewed as a strategic move by each party, as each has a unique business strength, said the source.

LEO satellite internet services could complement the 5G communications system, particularly in remote areas where traditional telecom infrastructure is not available.



The gateway station is being developed under a project called 'OneWeb Satellite Network Portal Site Hosting Services'.