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TNB muscles into fixed broadband segment

Pilot project in Jasin will be the platform to test the concept of Open Access

by SHAZNI ONG

TENAGA Nasional Bhd (TNB) is muscling into the fixed broadband segment, taking the competition to Telekom Malaysia Bhd (TM), by introducing a pilot project to connect homes to the Internet in Jasin, Melaka, later this month.

The broadband pilot project in Jasin, which is expected to be completed by the end of this year, will involve 1,100 houses in Taman Merbau, Taman Maju and Felda Kemendor.

TNB said the pilot project will be the platform to test the concept of Open Access.

The platform is expected to stimulate active participation from new and existing providers in backhaul and retail broadband that will create

competition that should push broadband prices down.

In July this year, the power company and TM, both government-linked companies, terminated a memorandum of understanding to develop an implementation plan to deliver the Nationwide Fiberisation Plan (NFP).

The government is seeking to liberalise the broadband sector in an effort to push prices down. TNB, with its thousands of miles of fibre network, could capitalise on its infrastructure to enter the new market previously dominated by TM.

TNB said the project is part of the government's National Connectivity Plan (NCP) that will allow, faster, cheaper and wider Internet accessibility.

TNB chairman Tan Sri Leo Moggie said the selected households will gain access to the high-speed broadband network, which will be made available through TNB's fibre-optic infrastructure that forms part of the company's

existing telecommunication network.

He said the national electricity grid corporation's telecommunication network now uses fibre-optic technology to ensure high reliability of electricity supply nationwide.

"Through this pilot project, TNB is exploring the potential of utilising the available capacity of TNB's telecommunication assets for the NCP," he said.

TNB said the outcome of the pilot project will help the company decide the commercial viability and expansion of the initiative.

The utility firm has about 9.2 million customers in Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and the Federal Territory of Labuan.

Communications and Multimedia Minister Gobind Singh Deo had said the government requested TNB to consider offering its own fibre-optic network to telcos to promote competition among voice and data service providers.

The minister said TNB has a ready fibre infrastructure which can be utilised by telcos, and will result in a faster and cheaper fiberisation deployment in the country. The government also changed the NFP to the NCP.

The emergence of TNB into the fixed broadband market is not a surprise for many observers as the utility company has over 12,000km of fibre optics installed.

TNB's progress into fibre-optic cable was due to a requirement for its fault tracking system called Scada and remote metering systems.

Over the years, the company has added more fibre optics into its infrastructure system that runs parallel with the electricity cables throughout the country.

Its bandwidth usage on the widely extensive fibre network that transmits data packets between two locations, however, is considered to be small.