

Cable deal set to boost KSA connectivity

By [Roger Field](#) on Tuesday, May 05, 2009

Saudi Arabia's telecoms sector is set to benefit from improved international connectivity following a deal to connect the country to additional undersea cable links to India and Europe.

The development came after Gulf Bridge International (GBI), a Qatar-based submarine cable operator, signed a memorandum of understanding with Riyadh-based Integrated Telecom Company (ITC), a consortium that holds a license to provide local and international data services in Saudi Arabia.

Under the deal, GBI will use its network of submarine cables to link ITC's networks to India and the Far East, and Europe. It will also improve links between Saudi Arabia and the rest of the Gulf.

The deal is expected to help ITC tap a growing demand for international data communications services in Saudi Arabia, which has one of the lowest broadband penetration rates in the region, at about 4%.

GBI's project to construct a submarine cable infrastructure around the Gulf will provide "physical route diversity and improve resilience" according to the company's CEO, Ahmed Mekky. "[The project] is particularly important for telecoms operators like ITC as it will provide reliability for its customers by spreading traffic across more than one system, which will significantly improve the service resilience against any potential disruptions," he said.

He added that the project will also increase the available data capacity in the region and encourage the development of more sophisticated services.

Mohammad Al-Bader, CEO, ITC, said that the Gulf region is experiencing an "enormous demand" for data communications. "Our mission at ITC is to develop and improve the underlying infrastructure to provide the region's operators with a better, faster and more cost-effective service. The new GBI cable will address these growing demands while bringing the Gulf communities closer. The GBI cable is a key project that will have a strong and positive impact on the region's telecom industry."

This latest announcement by GBI is part of a project to construct an international submarine cable infrastructure to be operational by 2011.