

Internet: South East Asia speeds to increase with new cable, say operators

A 20,000 km cable called The Asia-America Gateway is to be turned on next month. For those who suffer interminable delays in web traffic, the new cable should provide welcome relief.

The new cable, AAG for short, is a dedicated cable from Singapore and Malaysia to the US West Coast, providing a shorter and more direct routing than current cables.

And it's faster with a capacity of 1.92 terabits (million bits) per second and a capacity of 500 Gb per second of data.

The cable is a joint venture between Malaysia's Telekom Malaysia, the subject of persistent criticism for its appalling international data connections which are often reduced to a crawl, particularly during school holidays and early evenings when children and workers take over the network for social networking, downloading and streaming.

Even users with optical fibre connections rated at 2mbps regularly see download speeds of around 40kbps, an intolerable situation for the business community - and the subject of recent criticism from Australian companies who said that their inward investment decisions were coloured by poor connectivity.

But Starhub, which has a fast network within Singapore, also suffers from slow connections - in part due to high contention ratios but also due to international traffic.

It has taken three years and more than USD500 million to lay and install the cable.

The question will now be whether there is a wholesale switch to it or whether priority will be given to premium customers.