

News Release

October 22nd, 2008

GULF REGION TO BE CONNECTED VIA NEW SUBMARINE CABLE FROM GULF BRIDGE INTERNATIONAL

Countries within the Gulf Region are to be connected via an advanced, reliable and scalable submarine cable network provided by Gulf Bridge International (GBI), it was announced during this year's GITEX event.

Gulf Bridge International is a GCC – based, privately owned submarine cable operator backed by a number of high-profile regional and international enterprises such as Knowledge Ventures, Al Madar Telecom and Metel; and supported by British Telecom's long established know-how of submarine networks.

During the next two years, GBI will be embarking on a world class project of constructing a submarine cable infrastructure around the Gulf region to be operational in 2011.

The cable's route diversity -- achieved through spreading traffic across more than one system -- highly improves resilience and will be particularly important for telecom operators, banks, brokerage companies, media, educational institutions, airlines, and other businesses, which rely on real time transactions.

Mr. Rashid Alnaimi, Chairman of Knowledge Ventures said, "The realisation of a knowledge-based economy and society in the Gulf region is highly dependent on competitive and resilient connectivity, both on the regional and international scale. We trust that introducing GBI's new services will enhance the level of competition and quality on the submarine traffic market."

Suspension of regional Internet services in February 2007 caused by a cable-cut highlighted the demand for a reliable telecommunication infrastructure. The Gulf region is also currently experiencing increasing levels of broadband penetration, coupled with strong growth in the production and the distribution of local content.

The Gulf region is witnessing increased demand for new social networking applications and rich interactive services. The new GBI cable will address this growing demand and bring the Gulf communities closer together by enabling advanced applications that reinforce the social fabric of the Gulf. Major local telecom operators will also have the opportunity to increase content availability for IP Television services such as Video on Demand (VoD) and High Definition (HD) TV channels.

Mr. Ahmed Mekky, Chairman of Metel, said "The presence of the GBI cable will mark the first time that a Gulf-based enterprise has created a private submarine cable to connect the Gulf region over a single network. This new cable will deliver a new level of connectivity and bandwidth to the industry sectors that are driving the region's economic growth."

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British Telecom's (BT) Subsea Centre of Excellence has been entrusted to define the cable design and the supporting systems to enable the cable operations. The topology is based on self-healing ring network configuration, enabling traffic to be re-routed if the main cable gets cut. With design capacity that surpasses the forecasted demand for Gulf bandwidth demand, this cable will be highly scalable and able to apply capacity upgrades at any time – making the GBI cable capable of responding to sudden bursts in usage by new “bandwidth-hungry” applications that are likely to occur in the future. The cable will be protected by the state-of-the-art cable protection systems with early warning mechanisms for larger vessels approaching the cable line.

Gulf Bridge International believes that its unique position as a private and neutral submarine cable operator with flexible and lean operations will attract wide audience of interested parties.

[Info@gulfbridgeinternational.com for more info]

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About Gulf Bridge International

GBI is a submarine cable operator in the Arabian Gulf aiming to build advanced submarine cable system connecting all the Gulf States and providing highly reliable data capacity to satisfy the buoyant growth of bandwidth needs in the Middle East.

The company has Knowledge Ventures, Al Madar and Metel as its founding parties.

About BT

BT is one of the world's leading providers of communications solutions and services operating in 170 countries. Its principal activities include the provision of networked IT services globally; local, national and international telecommunications services to our customers for use at home, at work and on the move; broadband and internet products and services and converged fixed/mobile products and services. BT consists principally of four lines of business: BT Global Services, Openreach, BT Retail and BT Wholesale.

In the year ended 31 March 2008, BT Group plc's revenue was £20,704 million with profit before taxation and specific items of £2,506 million.

British Telecommunications plc (BT) is a wholly-owned subsidiary of BT Group and encompasses virtually all businesses and assets of the BT Group. BT Group plc is listed on stock exchanges in London and New York.

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