

Malaysia, Singapore to slash telecom roaming fees

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A woman texts a message in 2010. Malaysia and Singapore have agreed to slash roaming charges for voice calls and text messaging over the next two years in a landmark accord, regulators said Wednesday.

Malaysia and Singapore have agreed to slash roaming charges for voice calls and text messaging over the next two years in a landmark accord, regulators said Wednesday.

The agreement is the first bilateral deal to slash telecom [roaming charges](#) in Southeast Asia and is expected to trigger similar pacts within the region, Malaysian Information Minister Rais Yatim said.

A statement issued by the Infocomm Development Authority of [Singapore](#) (IDA) said roaming charges for voice calls will be reduced by up to 20 percent from May 1 this year, with the cut reaching a maximum

of 30 percent from May 1, 2012.

Roaming charges for short messaging services (SMS), or text messaging, will come down by up to 30 percent next month, reaching 50 percent from May 1 next year, the statement said.

IDA and the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission are "currently studying" roaming charges for data services, including multi-media services and video calls, and are "reviewing the appropriate actions," the statement added.

Rais described the agreement as "the first bilateral cooperation to reduce roaming charges within ASEAN and paves the way for other similar efforts among ASEAN countries," according to the statement.

ASEAN (the Association of Southeast Asian Nations) groups [Malaysia](#) and Singapore with Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam.

The statement quoted Singapore's Information Minister Lui Tuck Yew as urging regulators from both sides to "continue to identify new initiatives to enhance connectivity."

Telecom roaming allows subscribers to use their mobile phones to call when overseas using the network of the domestic operators, but charges are expensive.

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