Subsea cable to double S.Africa Internet capacity

April 19 2011

A picture from October shows students using their mobile phones at the Witwatersrand University in Johannesburg. A new undersea telecommunications cable has landed in South Africa, investors announced, saying the link would double the broadband capacity of the continent's largest economy.

A new undersea telecommunications cable has landed in South Africa, investors announced Tuesday, saying the link would double the broadband capacity of the continent's largest economy.

The 14,000-kilometre (8,700-mile) West Africa Cable System (WACS) fibre optic line links South Africa's Western Cape province to London, giving African Internet providers a direct connection to servers in Europe, its sponsors said.

The $650-million (460-million-euro) system will increase South Africa's

broadband capacity by more than 500 [gigabits](link) per second, said South African [telecommunications provider](link) Telkom, one of the 12 companies in the project.

That is the equivalent of more than 500 complete DVD downloads per second, a Telkom spokesman said.

The cable also has landing points in 10 other countries along Africa's western coast and promises to boost the bandwidth of the world's least-connected region, investors said.

"Africa has until now been a cyclist on the information superhighway," said Karel Pienaar, managing director for South Africa-based mobile service provider MTN, another partner in the project.

"We sincerely believe that the commercialisation of WACS and other submarine cables will set the stage for a mobile revolution that will enhance the quality of life for millions of people across the continent," Pienaar said in a statement.

WACS is the latest in a series of submarine cables that hold the promise of an Internet boom for Africa, where only 9.6 percent of people are [web users](link), compared to 65 percent of Europeans.

The capacity of Africa's fibre [optic cable](link) connections has expanded dramatically since 2009, when the continent relied mainly on slower satellite connections.

But the increased capacity has often been slow to reach residents, especially in rural areas, as service providers have lagged behind in building "last mile" infrastructure -- the wires, cables and towers needed to get data to and from the end user.

(c) 2011 AFP

Citation: Subsea cable to double S.Africa Internet capacity (2011, April 19) retrieved 20 May 2024 from https://phys.org/news/2011-04-subsea-cable-safrica-internet-capacity.html