

Telekom Malaysia is directly connected to 30 countries via cable, satellite and microwave. The telecommunications operator is increasing its fibre optic routes. The Kuantan-Kota Kinabalu Optic Fibre Submarine Cable System, which spans 1500 km across the South China Sea, will cater for the domestic and international telecommunications traffic up to early 2000. Telekom Malaysia expects to launch the first phase of Integrated Service Digital Network (ISDN) commercially sometime in 1993, whereby telephone line, telefax, computer and data features would be combined into one common line. The availability of ISDN will further enable Telekom Malaysia to expand the range of services and provide high quality service. By the year 2000, the objective is to achieve complete digitalization of the network.

Telekom Malaysia's Customer Automated Services System (CASS), developed with the assistance of Bell Canada International, enables a more efficient servicing of customers. Before CASS, service application processing would take months. Now Telekom Malaysia is able to give service on demand where CASS is available. This system is being implemented in stages and soon all telephone subscribers should enjoy the benefits of CASS.

Telekom Malaysia is committed to provide adequate telephone services to the rural population in support of the Government's efforts to foster national development. The telephone customer base in rural areas has increased from 146,000 in 1987 to over 200,000. The number of rural public telephones increased 30% over the last three years. Where physical cable connection to outlying and isolated areas are not possible, Telekom Malaysia has provided the ATUR system and solar energy.

Telekom Malaysia is expected to invest nearly Cdn \$5 billion in further developing Malaysia's communications infrastructure under the Sixth Malaysia Plan (1991-1995). Under this plan, a major portion of the investment will be used for digitalizing telecommunications networks at the customer end, installing new exchanges and the construction of optical fibre networks.

The telecommunications sector growth rate is projected at 12 to 15% for the next five years, with as much as 30% of the growth in telephone lines being accounted for by the business sector alone. The total number of telephone subscribers is growing at an average of 11% a year, and improved efficiency at the national telephone company, Telekom Malaysia, is expected to generate a 12% growth rate for telephone subscribers over the next few years. Telekom Malaysia will continue to introduce value added services, as it had in 1990 with four new services; videotext, circuit switched data network, public electronic message service and toll free service. In addition, the allocation for rural telecommunications is expected to increase by 300% from the present Cdn \$2.1 million to Cdn \$8.4 million. To meet the requirements of banking and other sectors involved in mass transfer of data, private firms and banks have begun to install digital multiplier pulse code modulation and line equipment.