



Office of the Telecommunications Authority
The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region



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Press Release

OFTA's Update on Impact on External Telecommunication Services due to Earthquakes near Taiwan on 26 December

The following is an update by the Office of the Telecommunications Authority (OFTA) as at 11 am today (28 December) on the impact on external telecommunication services due to the earthquakes near Taiwan on 26 December:

Facts

Due to a series of earthquakes south-southeast of Gaoxiong, Taiwan at around 1226 UTC on 26 December 2006, nearly all the submarine cables passing over the earthquake region and connected to Japan, Korea, the US, Canada, etc. were damaged and broken. According to the reports submitted to OFTA by telecommunications operators, six out of the seven main submarine cable systems in the Luzon Strait were broken down one by one at different time from 8:43 pm at 26 December to 27 December. The cables account for about 90% of the total capacity and mainly affect connections to Japan, Taiwan, Korea, the US and Canada.

Impact

Due to the damage of most of the submarine cables, all the external telecommunications services including IDD calls, roaming calls and Internet access to overseas were seriously affected starting from the morning of 27 December when business resumed. It did not affect any local telecommunications services.

Latest Service Status

Operators have implemented contingency plans and arrange re-routing of the traffic via all other cables which are still in service. At present, voice call services including IDD calls and roaming calls to most of the countries/territories except for Taiwan have nearly resumed normal. However, Internet access to overseas web sites is still congested.

Repairing Status

Two submarine cable maintenance ships from Singapore and the Philippines are on the way to the scene. Three more ships will depart today.

In general, it requires about 5 to 7 days to repair the cables. However, due to the earthquake, the seabed may have been damaged and there may be further earthquakes that will affect the maintenance work.

Office of the Telecommunications Authority
28 December 2006