

Lebanon's Minister of Telecom Marwan Hamadeh promised that DSL internet connections will be made available in May 5th in areas including Greater Beirut, Tripoli, Sidon, Jounieh and Jbeil. The Ministry of Telecom had planned to ensure the availability of DSL last October, but the war with Israel delayed improvements in the undersea cable connecting Lebanon to the internet. Minister Hamadeh said DSL Internet connection will be a driving force for Lebanon's economy. He recognized the economic importance of high speed internet arguing that many multinational firms left Lebanon to other countries, such as Dubai, due to the poor Internet and telecom Networks. He added that fast and reliable DSL connections DSL would stop illegal ISPs, which currently control an estimated 30% of the market. Up to 100,000 residential internet users connect via 'illegal' cables, which use satellite connections for downloads and local ISPs for uploads. This costs around USD50 for connection, plus USD40 to USD50 per month.

ISPs have not released final DSL prices, but the ministry of telecommunications has proposed installation for USD37. While a residential 256kbps connection would cost \$33 per month, 512kbps \$46 and 1Mbps \$77, businesses would pay slightly higher prices.