

# So clear it's satellite radio

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Asiaspace to bring fade-free reception, lots of channels

By Diana Chin

**PUTRAJAYA:** Malaysians may soon be able to enjoy clear, consistent and fade-free reception on the radio and receive channels like CNN, Bloomberg, BBC, plus a number of programmes from countries like Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines, for a one-off payment as low as RM500.

This is what Asiaspace Doteom Sdn Bhd hopes to deliver to the Malaysian public in the next few months.

The company has been

awarded the satellite digital audio broadcasting licence to operate the WorldSpace satellite radio service. The WorldSpace system combines two powerful technologies of the Information Age satellites and digital transmission creating an entirely new medium.

The system allows anyone in its service area to receive satellite radio and multimedia broadcasts directly from a satellite using a small portable receiver and its 10-cm wide satellite antenna.

At the launch of the satellite radio service by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Asiaspace chairman Abdul Ghani Abdullah said the company hoped to attract local distributors for the WorldSpace receivers.

"We hope after this launch, local companies will be interested in becoming distributors or even manufacturers of the receivers for distribution in Malaysia or even to any part of the world where the satellite's footprint covers."

Presently, associated companies of WorldSpace in Thailand, South Korea and India are manufacturing low-cost receivers for the markets where the footprints are for the satellites.

WorldSpace operates three satellites AmeriStar, AfriStar and AsiaStar. Through AsiaStar Satellite operating over this region, Malaysian radio content providers can uplink their programmes for distribution to the countries in the region

under AsiaStar's footprint.

Airspace is planning for the installation of its own earth station in the country which will enable contents or programmes from Malaysian providers to be fed directly to the station for uplinking to the AsiaStar satellite, and downlinked in Malaysia or any other country under the footprint of AsiaStar.

"We believe this will increase their coverage and extend to regions in Asia or Africa for that matter, which we hope will increase the Malaysian broadcasters' revenue on advertising," said Abdul Ghani.

At present, listeners in Malaysia are able to tune in to 24 channels under the footprint of the AsiaStar satellite which covers most of Asia towards the Middle East and Northern China - as well as the fringes of Australia and Oceania.

However, Abdul Ghani stressed that Asiaspace is not in the business of broadcasting. "We are not broadcasters, that is we are not content providers, neither are we involved in broadcasting," he said, adding that Asiaspace is not competing with Astro.

"We hold the uplink licence for Malaysia to operate the WorldSpace satellite radio service for the next 20 years."

The WorldSpace service also allows access to the Internet for data communications and multimedia access via a PC data card, which will be packaged with Windows Plug-n-Play software.