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Clear, fuss-free access with new radio system

PUTRAJAYA, Sat. - The introduction of the WorldSpace digital audio broadcasting system will allow Malaysians to access clear and fuss-free radio transmissions from all over the world via portable receivers.

The satellite-based system, which presently offers 24 radio channels such as CNN, Bloomberg and BBC, was launched by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad at his office here today.

The service is provided by AsiaSpace Dotcom Sdn Bhd, the sole licensee to provide access to the WorldSpace system in Malaysia.

The system promises clear and uninterrupted radio transmission via the AsiaStar satellite, one of three satellites in WorldSpaces' network of satellites providing coverage to more than 5.2 billion people worldwide.

The audio programmes are broadcast directly, on a single frequency, to compact and portable receivers which can be bought from local distributors.

AsiaSpace director Abdul Ghani Abdullah said the service will be available beginning today.

"The difference between the system and existing satellite radio is that it operates on a single frequency in any part of the country.

"We welcome distributors to market these receivers and will assist them in matters of import and taxes."

AsiaSpace is currently in discussions with one of the major retailers of electronic products in the country to distribute the receivers, and Abdul Ghani anticipates sales to begin early next year.

Currently there are six receivers in the market, manufactured in countries such as Thailand, Korea and India.

The prices range from around RM250-RM280 for the most affordable model, a Hitachi, to about RM800 for a Panasonic. Users only need to buy the receiver.

The service is free and there is no subscription rate.

AsiaSpace holds its own uplink licence which enables it to uplink and downlink radio programmes via satellite, providing the opportunity for radio content providers to distribute their programmes to other countries.

WorldSpace (Asia) chairman Richard E. Butler said WorldSpace is working on a radio receiver for use in cars which would provide real-time news and traffic information.

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