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Digital terrestrial TV to reach 98% of populated areas by 4Q17

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Malaysia is aiming for ASO by June 2018 after which analogue broadcasting will cease completely

by NG MIN SHEN

THE digitalisation of broadcast television (TV) in Malaysia is on track, with digital terrestrial TV (DTT) coverage expected to cover 98% of populated areas countrywide by the fourth-quarter of this year (4Q17).

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Najib Razak said yesterday that the target is in line with the national agenda to transform the country's broadcasting industry to improve the living standards of citizens as the nation aims for developed status by 2020.

"The target of reaching 98% of populated areas is expected to be completed by 4Q17," he said.

Najib was speaking at the official launch of myFreeview, a brand which comprises free-to-air (FTA) broadcasters namely Media Prima Bhd, Radio Televisyen Malaysia (RTM), TV AlHijrah and Bernama News Channel.

"In line with the target set by Asean countries to achieve analogue



Pic by Ismail Che Rus

(From left) Najib, Communications and Multimedia Minister Datuk Seri Dr Salleh Said Keruak and Transport Minister Datuk Seri Liow Tiong Lai at the launch of myFreeview

switch-off (ASO) between 2015 to 2020 in phases, Malaysia aims for ASO by June 2018," he said.

Following ASO, analogue broadcasting will cease completely, thus the transition to digital broadcast TV must be achieved before then.

Twenty-four transmission towers have been constructed throughout the country, currently offering myFreeview to over 85%

of the population.

The switch to DTT requires households that do not have digital-ready TV sets to acquire a set-top box, which decodes a digital TV signal to analogue for the TV screen.

Thus, the government has pledged to distribute decoder units to 2.2 million 1Malaysia People's Aid (BR1M) households nationwide.

This is in addition to MYTV

Broadcasting Sdn Bhd's commitment to provide two million free decoders. In total, 4.2 million BR1M households will benefit from the transition.

"The distribution will be carried out in stages up to 2Q18," Najib added.

Digital transmission is said to allow superior picture quality and increased interactivity. It also allows for more efficient utilisation of spectrum resource compared to analogue broadcasting, as more digital channels can be carried on a single analogue TV channel bandwidth.

"The spectrum that will be freed up with digital transmission will be reallocated for telecommunication and cellular services," Najib said.

The infrastructure and network operator of DTT services in Malaysia is MYTV, which was awarded the sole licence from the government in early 2014.

According to Najib, MYTV is also responsible for building and overseeing the infrastructure of myFreeview for the next 30 years.

The service will provide better quality picture and sound, more FTA channels, access to an electronic programme guide, multi-language subtitles and the ability to watch TV in high definition.