

S. Korean firm unveils robot playmate for kids

April 20 2011



A child plays with a robot playmate entitled "Kibot" which has a monkey face and a display panel on its body during its launching event in Seoul. Parents can remotely control the robot by mobile phone and monitor children via a camera embedded in Kibot.

South Korean telecoms operator KT on Wednesday rolled out a robot playmate for children in a move aimed at cashing in on the potentially lucrative industry.

Kibot, which has a monkey face and a display panel on its body, can read books, sing songs, play online games and wheel around with its cheeks blinking and head tilting.

The robot, about 20 centimetres (eight inches) tall, also allows [children](#) to make video phonecalls to their parents when an electronic card is placed on its face.

Kibot, targeting those aged three to seven, can also tell children "Let's play" along with a few other expressions -- such as "It feels good" in response to a pat.

Parents can remotely control it by mobile phone and monitor children via a camera embedded in Kibot, said KT, the nation's second-largest wireless operator.

The [robot](#) made by local firm iriver, in which KT invested 4 billion won (\$3.68 million), costs 485,000 won (\$447) in addition to the monthly wireless bill.

"Kibot will be like a friend for kids, who constantly need something by their side to touch, see and play with," Seo Yu-Yeol, head of KT's home business group, told reporters.

The former state-run firm in 2005 developed several robots as part of a national campaign to promote the industry but met with a lukewarm response.

Seo said things have changed with [wireless networks](#) so common and smartphones ubiquitous.

[South Korea](#) last year deployed about 30 robots to teach English to [schoolchildren](#) in a pilot project designed to nurture the nascent industry,

in which it pledged to invest 100 billion won over three years.

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Citation: S. Korean firm unveils robot playmate for kids (2011, April 20) retrieved 9 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-04-korean-firm-unveils-robot-playmate.html>

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