

Cuba, amid the censorship, wades into WiFi

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Cubans visit a cybercafe in Havana on June 21, 2013

Cuba, where Internet access is largely limited to government employees and pricey pay-by-hour public access, plans to start offering wireless service for the first time this month, officials said Saturday.

Wireless Internet connections—for laptops, smartphones or tablets—will get a limited rollout through state-run Etecsa in Cuba's second-largest city, Santiago de Cuba.

"Santiago (de Cuba) has been picked by Etecsa to test wifi service late this month," read a statement on the website of the Union of Cuban Journalists, a government association.

Cuba, the only communist-run country in the Americas, allows some locals such as journalists, doctors and athletes to have Internet access at home.

But anyone who wants their own router—for a WiFi signal—needs permission from the Communications Ministry first.

Tech-savvy young Cubans often piggy-back on the signals of hotels and government offices.

The journalists' site said WiFi access—unclear where for now—will cost \$4.5 an hour. That is the same rate, unaffordable to many, as that offered at public Internet cafes.

Most Cubans make under \$20 a month.

Last year, 3.4 percent of homes in Cuba had Internet access — one of the world's lowest rates, according to international technology authorities.

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