

Havana wants Internet for 'all Cubans' by 2020

April 2 2015



People queue at an internet service provider in Havana, on January 20, 2015

Havana announced Thursday it wants "all Cubans" to be connected to the Internet by 2020, a goal the United States says will be difficult given the government's communications monopoly.

The communist island already has one of the world's lowest connectivity

rates, with only 3.4 percent of the population able to access the Internet from home in 2013.

"The Cuban government is working to ensure that the IT resources and Internet are available and accessible to all Cubans" in five years, Communication Ministry IT director Ernesto Rodriguez said, according to the official news website Cubadebate.

A push to include all households reaches beyond a goal set by the United Nations for 50 percent of the population in developing countries to have Internet access in five years at a price of less than five percent of their monthly revenue.

On Monday, a senior US official close to talks with Havana questioned Cuba's ability to deliver on even 50 percent Internet access by 2020 if it doesn't lift the state's monopoly on telecommunications and allow in private sector competitors and foreign investment.

"They are looking for mechanisms by which, in the first instance, they can expand connectivity while at the same time retaining their mechanism for market management," the State Department official said.

Last week, a US delegation traveled to Cuba to follow up on re-establishing normal telecommunications links as part of the two countries' bid to normalize ties.

Washington and Havana have held a series of talks since US President Barack Obama and Cuban President Raul Castro decided in December to work to restore full relations severed more than 50 years ago.

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