

NKorea allows limited Internet cell phone service

22 May 2009, By KWANG-TAE KIM , Associated Press Writer

(AP) -- North Korea has begun limited Internet service for mobile phone users, a government Web site reported, months after launching an advanced network in cooperation with an Egyptian telecommunications company.

Mobile phone use in authoritarian North Korea comes with restrictions. Phones do not allow contact with the outside world, or with the special telephone networks that foreigners are normally permitted to use inside [North Korea](#).

The service allows North Koreans to access a [Web site](#) through their phones to see news reports carried by the country's official Korean Central News Agency as well as news about the capital Pyongyang, according to the government-run Uriminzokkiri Web site.

On the Net:

<http://www.ryomyong.com>

The Korean-language Web site as seen on an ordinary computer screen also allows viewers to listen to North Korean music, get information about books, art and investment opportunities in North Korea and even engage in Internet chatting. It was unclear, however, if those services were available in the mobile version.

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Uriminzokkiri did not give any further details in its report Thursday on whether the service is restricted to the capital Pyongyang or available elsewhere.

North Korea introduced an advanced [mobile phone](#) network in partnership with Cairo-based Orascom Telecom in December. That marked the first time that North Koreans were allowed to use cell phones since a previous, short-lived mobile service was shut down without explanation in 2004.

Orascom said at the time that the 3G network was initially deployed to cover Pyongyang, which has a population of more than 2 million, with plans to expand coverage to the entire country over the next few years.

The number of mobile phone users had reached 20,000 by the end of March, including some foreigners, Tokyo-based Choson Sinbo newspaper, considered a mouthpiece for the North Korean regime, said earlier this month.

APA citation: NKorea allows limited Internet cell phone service (2009, May 22) retrieved 29 November 2021 from <https://phys.org/news/2009-05-nkorea-limited-internet-cell.html>

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