

'Car PC' to keep you busy in traffic jams

You can browse the internet or use multimedia applications when you're caught in a gridlock

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BANGALORE: If you are one of those who curse the traffic jam every time you are caught in one, this technology may prompt you to look forward to it.

There may be nothing magical about a personal computer, but if it is small enough to perch right on the headrest behind the driver's seat and allow you to browse the internet, it is certain to divert your attention from the immediate chaos and focus on some pending business.

"That is something you would wish to do, if you are an entrepreneur or a professional who can't afford to waste time," said M A Mohamed Saliya, Managing Director of iWave Systems.

The 'Car PC' which the city-based company has designed and developed, was demonstrated recently at the Embedded Systems Conference, the global event for embedded designers at the NIMHANS Convention Centre.

The small form factor (size) of the PC makes it easy for car manufacturers and those providing cab services to incorpo-



A person demonstrating the features of the 'Car PC'

rate seamlessly into the vehicle, without any altering of the design. The PC runs at 1.1 or 1.6 GHz speed using just 5 watts of power, one sixth of the power required to run normal PCs.

"With up to 2GB RAM, it will be easy for the passengers in the car to view multimedia contents which the driver can play through two USB ports available near his seat," Saliya added. "Using virtualisation technology, we can install an additional monitor in the adjacent seat and let both the passengers use the system. The PC is just seven-inches wide and is compact with touch-screen keypads, which the passengers would find it convenient to use."

Broadband Connectivity

With two USB ports on the driver's side, it is also possible for

passengers to use 3-G wireless broadband to stay connected. "People have problems using laptops since they are concerned about its battery life," Saliya said. "Since the Car PC uses minimum power drawn from the car battery, they can be assured of connectivity until they reach their destination."

Though iWave is primarily a designing company, Saliya said it should be possible for it to collaborate with manufacturers and deliver the complete product to automobile makers in the country. "This kind of technology would be handy for cab agencies," said Anand

Parthasarathy, a Bangalore-based technology writer who has reviewed iWave's Car PC on his website India Tech Online.

"Given the amount of time people spend commuting to places like the new airport and electronic city, providing internet or multimedia access for an additional fee of Rs 100 or Rs 200 would be welcomed by all techies who would love to check their mails or chat with their clients on their way to office," he added.

Though iWave has declined to comment on the possibility of mounting the Car PC on cabs,

they hope to incorporate the technology in the newly manufactured cars. Since it consumes less power and occupies less space, it is also ideal to replace conventional PCs in cyber centres which are hard-pressed for cash to stay afloat these days.

"Though the company is not revealing the cost of the PC, the fact that they are willing to focus on Indian market suggests that it won't be so expensive," Parthasarathy said. "When you search for similar products on the internet, you would find most of them beyond the reach of Indian car manufacturers."

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