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## Digital TV to give viewers more choice of channels

**Tebogo Monama**

THE more than nine million South African households with a television set may soon have access to more than 20 television channels.

This was announced yesterday at the launch of the Digital Dzonga Council in Braamfontein, Johannesburg.

The council, made up of 15 members from government, the broadcasting industry and other stakeholders, is appointed by government to oversee the migration of television broadcasting from analogue to digital.

Trial runs for the migration started in November last year and the commercial transfer will start next April.

Consumers need to buy a set top box (STB) – a kind of decoder that would transfer the digital signal into analogue for a television set.

The STB will cost about R700, but five million households will be subsidised at a cost of R400 million.

Communications Minister Siphwe Nyanda said: "Poor households will be subsidised. If you get a pension or an income grant, then you will be subsidised. You also have to show proof of your TV licence to qualify."

The main reason of moving from analogue to digital is to free up bandwidth that can be used for other services.

"With analogue, one television channel will take up more bandwidth. Moving to digital we can fill up at least nine channels where we previously could only fit one.

"We will have more television channels. You will also get better audio and digital reception," said Nyanda.

Consumers also need to buy an STB for every television set they own.

In April next year, STBs will be installed for 60 percent of consumers, with all metropolitan areas going fully digital by 2015.

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