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World Bank Commits $100 million To Boost Zambia's Digital Infrastructure and Narrow Digital Divide

The World Bank has committed US$100 million to the Digital Zambia Acceleration Project (DZAP) to enhance Zambia's digital infrastructure and reduce the digital divide. The project, announced by World Bank MD Zhang Wengcai during his visit to Zambia's Technology and Science Minister Felix Chipota Mutati, aims to expand broadband access and deploy digital public infrastructure to boost efficiencies in both public and private sectors. Additionally, DZAP will support the development of digital skills in key sectors.

The funding will combine national and International Development Association (IDA) funds with $20 milion in unguaranteed commercial financing. While awaiting World Bank Board approval in March 2025, a Project Preparation Advance of US$6 million will be used for preliminary activities. A project implementation unit will be set up within the Smart Zambia Institute.

Despite widespread mobile phone usage, about 40% of Zambia's population remains without internet access, and fixed broadband is limited to around 99,000 users. Challenges include frequent load shedding by the state-owned power utility ZESCO, affecting mobile operators' service quality.

Comment: The World Bank's $100 million investment in the Digital Zambia Acceleration Project (DZAP) is expected to improve digital access and economic growth in Zambia by expanding broadband infrastructure and developing digital skills. This project aims to boost efficiencies in both public and private sectors and enhance public services through better digital infrastructure. However, challenges such as frequent power outages may hinder implementation. The combination of different funding sources and alignment with government priorities suggests strong support and sustainability for the project. Immediate steps, including a Project Preparation Advance and the establishment of a project implementation unit, indicate a well-structured approach to the project rollout.

For more information, please click here.

NCC Mandates Telecom Operators in Nigeria to Limit Tariff Plans for Enhanced Transparency and Fair Competition

The Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) has directed all telecommunications operators in Nigeria to limit the number of available tariff plans to a maximum of seven per operator. This directive, part of new tariff guidelines aimed at enhancing transparency, consumer understanding, and fair competition, also limits the number of bundles to one hundred per operator. While there are no limits on the number of Add-ons, operators must inform subscribers of their current Add-ons at the point of purchase.

The NCC has mandated full disclosure of all tariff components and conditions, requiring telcos to simplify and clearly present their offerings. Operators must develop detailed migration plans to transition subscribers to new tariff plans smoothly, without service quality loss, and obtain prior approval for promotional elements, which must be standalone products with clear terms.

The directive takes effect from 29 July 2024, and operators are required to submit comprehensive reports on all active tariff plans, bundles, promotions, and quality metrics. Despite these new regulations, operators have denied any approval for tariff increases, insisting that rates remain unchanged.

Comment: The NCC's directive to limit tariff plans is likely to enhance consumer transparency, simplify choices, and promote fair competition among telecom operators in Nigeria. However, operators may need to streamline their offerings and adjust marketing strategies to comply, potentially affecting customer options and requiring careful management to avoid service disruptions during the transition.

For more information, please click here.

Uganda's Utel Secures $225m Investment from Dubai's RCC to Drive Telecom Modernization

Uganda's state-run Uganda Telecommunication Corp. (UTel) is set to undergo a major transformation following a $225 million investment from Dubai-based Rowad Capital Commercial (RCC) LLC. RCC will acquire a 60% majority stake in UTel, marking a milestone for the company, which was established in 2021 after acquiring assets from the financially troubled Uganda Telecom Limited (UTL).

This investment follows discussions that began after a meeting between Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni and RCC in October 2023. The partnership aims to modernize Uganda's telecommunications infrastructure, with RCC's capital expected to enhance UTel's services and network expansion.

UTel, currently owned by Uganda's Finance and ICT ministries, will undergo a change in ownership structure due to this investment. The deal is also aligned with Uganda's regulations requiring telecom firms to list on the stock exchange, a step UTel is expected to take within the next two years.

This strategic partnership is seen as a crucial move in driving Uganda's digital transformation and economic growth, with stakeholders closely monitoring its impact on the telecommunications sector.

Comment: The $225 million investment in UTel by Dubai's RCC is expected to enhance Uganda's telecommunications infrastructure, leading to improved services and expanded network coverage. This will likely increase competition in the market, challenging established players like MTN Uganda and Airtel Uganda. The investment is also poised to drive economic growth and digital transformation in Uganda by boosting the country's digital infrastructure. Additionally, UTel will need to comply with regulatory requirements to list on the stock exchange, which could enhance transparency and public involvement. The partnership may also lead to job creation and skill development within Uganda's ICT sector.

For more information, please click here.

Democratic Republic of Congo Launches First Tier-III Data Centre to Drive Digital Transformation



The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has taken a step in its digital evolution with the launch of its first Tier-III certified, open-access, carrier-neutral data centre, named OADC TEXAF Digital. A joint venture between Open Access Data Centres (OADC) and TEXAF, this state-of-the-art facility is designed to foster a dynamic digital ecosystem, supporting a wide range of digital services and infrastructure for businesses and individuals across the country. Located in Kinshasa, the data centre offers colocation, interconnect, and peering services, and is powered by hydro generation, emphasizing sustainability.

OADC TEXAF Digital aims to enhance digital connectivity in the DRC, attracting major national and international carriers, with the banking sector leading in adoption. The centre's carrier-neutral approach is expected to boost competition, reduce internet costs, and contribute to the growth of the DRC's digital ecosystem. The launch of this facility marks a milestone in the DRC's digital journey, promising to accelerate digitalization, improve ICT capabilities, and lay a solid foundation for future technological advancements in the country.

Comment: The launch of the OADC TEXAF Digital data centre in the DRC is likely to boost the country's digital infrastructure, leading to enhanced connectivity and increased competition among service providers. This could lower internet costs for businesses and individuals, accelerate the digitalization of various sectors, and support economic growth by attracting more investments and technological advancements in the region.

The facility's focus on sustainability and its carrier-neutral approach are also poised to improve efficiency and drive the expansion of the DRC's digital ecosystem.

For more information, please click here.

Botswana's SmartBots Free WIFI Program Expands Internet Access and Economic Opportunities

In Botswana, the high cost of internet data has led to the adoption of the SmartBots free Wi-Fi program, introduced in 2019. The initiative, which provides free internet via routers in public spaces like clinics, schools, and traditional courtyards, has grown to serve over 1.6 million users. Internet penetration has risen from 42% in 2019 to 77% in 2024, largely due to SmartBots, which offers speeds of up to 10Mbps and is used daily by over 130,000 people.

The program aims to expand connectivity to more villages and isolated farming areas. While it has been beneficial for diverse users, including students and job seekers, there are concerns about cybersecurity due to the open network's lack of password protection. Despite these risks, the program is highly valued for its accessibility and impact on increasing internet use across the country.

Comment: The SmartBots free Wi-Fi program is likely to enhance digital inclusion and economic opportunities in Botswana by increasing internet access for low-income groups. However, the lack of password protection raises cybersecurity concerns, which could pose risks to users. The program's success may also inspire further expansion and similar initiatives, transforming connectivity infrastructure and digital access across the country.

For more information, please click here.



Liquid Intelligent Technologies Enhances Cross-Border Connectivity with Upgraded Fibre Route Between Kenya and Uganda

Liquid Intelligent Technologies has upgraded its 1,300km fibre route from Mombasa, Kenya, to Busia on the Ugandan border, boosting regional connectivity with increased multi-terabit capacity and enhanced resilience. This expansion improves digital connectivity and service reliability, offering 99.99% uptime and supporting digital transformation across East Africa. The upgrade forms part of Liquid's vision of a digitally connected Africa, complements Kenya's digital transformation efforts, and provides critical infrastructure for regional economic development and digital services.

OADC TEXAF Digital aims to enhance digital connectivity in the DRC, attracting major national and international carriers, with the banking sector leading in adoption. The centre's carrier-neutral approach is expected to boost competition, reduce internet costs, and contribute to the growth of the DRC's digital ecosystem. The launch of this facility marks a milestone in the DRC's digital journey, promising to accelerate digitalization, improve ICT capabilities, and lay a solid foundation for future technological advancements in the country.



Comment: The upgrade of Liquid Intelligent Technologies' fibre route enhances digital connectivity between Kenya and Uganda, increasing service reliability to 99.99% uptime. This advancement will likely boost regional economic development, support digital transformation, and contribute to the broader goal of a digitally connected Africa, aligning with Kenya's digital initiatives and improving infrastructure for business sectors across East Africa.

For more information, please click here.



Nigerian NCC Launches Device Management System to Enhance Mobile Security and Combat Phone-Related Crime

The Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) has launched a new Device Management System (DMS) designed to enhance mobile security and regulatory compliance. The DMS, a central equipment identity register (CEIR), will track and regulate mobile devices across Nigeria's communication networks by registering their International Mobile Equipment Identity (IMEI) numbers. This system aims to prevent issues such as phone theft, fraud, and the use of counterfeit devices.

By integrating with international IMEI databases, the NCC-DMS will maintain a comprehensive registry of devices and blacklist stolen or illegal phones, which will be blocked across all networks in Nigeria. All mobile network operators in the country are required to connect to the system, which will also involve a registration fee. This initiative supports the NCC's goals to curb counterfeit devices, enhance national security, protect consumers, and increase government revenue.

Comment: The introduction of the Device Management System (DMS) by Nigeria's NCC should improve mobile device security and crime detection in the country. By creating a central registry for tracking and managing mobile devices, the DMS aims to reduce phone theft, combat the use of counterfeit devices, and prevent fraudulent activities.

For more information, please click here.

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