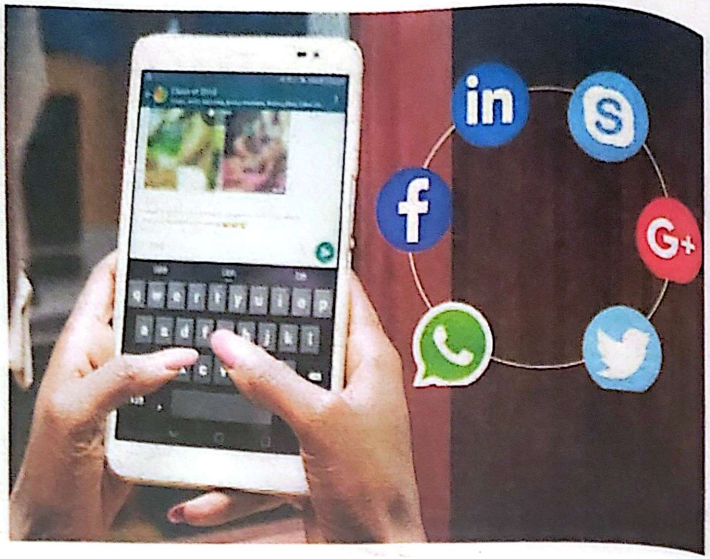
WEDNESDAY, JULY 26, 2017
Daily Monitor
WWW.MONITOR.CO.UG

China to help Uganda



Curbing crime. China will help Uganda government fight cyber crimes committed through different social media platforms such as WhatsApp and other Internet enabled channels. PHOTO BY ABUBAKER LUBOWA

Combat. Officials hope the direct involvement of China, which has distinction for firewalling on the Internet will help Uganda combat online fraud, tax evasion, pornography and other cyber crimes.

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BEIJING. The Chinese government has through a statutory company agreed to offer Uganda a comprehensive cyber-security solution, including technical capacity to monitor and prevent social media abuse.

China National Electronics Import & Export Corp (CEIEC) committed to build the capacity of Uganda Communications Commission, Police and ministry of Internal Affairs to guard against cyber criminals, according to details of preliminary agreements reached with Ugandan officials in Beijing yesterday.

The Ugandan delegation is led by State Privatisation and Investment minister Evelyn Anite and includes her trade counterpart Micheal Werikhe.

Officials hope the direct involvement of China, which has distinction for firewalling on the Internet will help Uganda combat online fraud, tax evasion, pornography and other cybercrimes.

"We cannot hide our heads in the sand as if there is nothing happening. Criminals are using social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, YouTube and Twitter to commit crimes with impunity," Ms Anite told their hosts, adding: "Cybercrimes such as terrorism, online fraud, human trafficking and pornography are becoming more commonplace, more dangerous, and more sophisticated yet as a country, we are helpless."

This expression of dire need rang out to the Chinese like a song, with CEIEC vice president Zhou Xin assuring that they have capacity to offer advanced national defense electronics system and all-round supporting services for Uganda.

The company founded in 1980 is wholly owned by the Chinese government, and Mr Xin said he planned a visit to Uganda next month to meet President Museveni.

"We would like to secure our country and stop impunity online without offending the peoples' freedom of speech. We have requested CEIEC to help us fight back," Ms Anite said.

Mr Zong Rui, general representative of South East Africa (Business Department of Africa), welcomed the request by the Uganda delegation particularly on internet security and establishing a cellphone factory in Uganda.

He also expressed interest in helping Uganda provide security for oil installations. "We have invested over $1.2b in Africa's defence systems, public security, communications systems and national defence systems. We are experts in those areas and we hope to share our success and technology with Uganda," Mr Rui said.

CEIEC has built wide-ranged cooperation relationships with more than 160 countries and, besides opening China up to the world, is a key player providing electronic business solutions.

He promised to open a branch in Uganda soon.

Earlier, Minister Werikhe also told the company executives that new technologies have created new opportunities for criminal yet Uganda lacks capacity to fight back.

The ministers assured the company of government support and delivered greetings from the President.

"Even critical infrastructure for developed countries, including both private and public sector networks, are targeted by cyber criminals," he said, adding: "This is the reason why we must monitor social media and internet before it's too late. And as a country, we have also been grappling with the problem of finance monitoring, but with the CEIEC technology, it's going to be difficult to evade taxes."

Hackers have lately increased attacks to steal government records, sabotage energy infrastructure and manufacturing plants, making states and big enterprises vulnerable.

In Uganda, the direct entry of China in providing technology solutions and online surveillance will rattle a population increasingly vocal on social media but wary of government.

Police have arrested a number of Ugandans, some facing prosecution, for their social media posts deemed offensive or abusive under the Computer Misuse AcT, 2011.

The government on Election Day in 2016, shut down social media, triggering global condemnation for its intolerance and high-handedness.

According to the Africa Internet Users, Facebook and 2017 Population Statistics, Uganda with a population of 38 million people has about 13 million Internet users as of March, 2017 and 2.2 million Facebook users as of June 30, 2016. Majority Facebook users log in using mobile devices.

IN CHINA



Leader of delegation. State Privatisation and Investment minister Evelyn Anite.

Delegation. The Ugandan officials are in China to shop for technology and investor to proof local Internet use, construct a factory for assembling cellphone handsets as well as a cement plant in Karamoja sub-region. They are also shopping for investors in other sectors of the economy. Today, they are meeting Chinese entrepreneurs who are interested in investing in Uganda.

fight Internet abuse