

TECHNOLOGY

Uganda's quiet tech revolution: Rise of a neutral exchange point

The NIPX provides a platform for Internet Service Providers, content providers, cloud services and data centres to interconnect.

Technology |

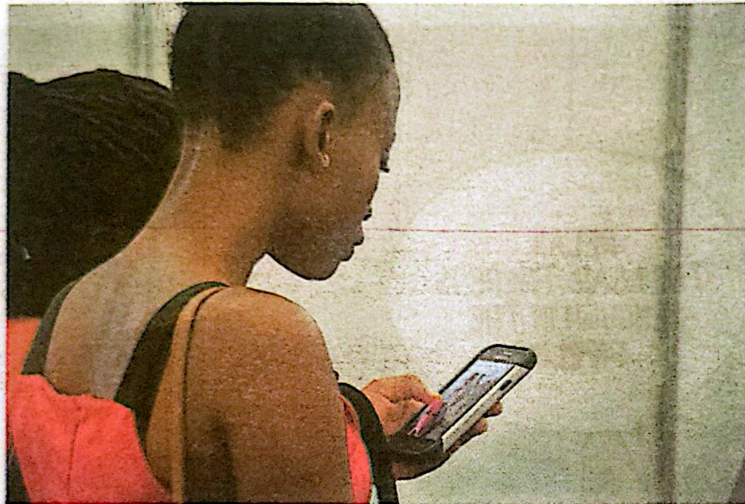
COLLINS MUHWEZI

The government has launched the National Internet Protocol Peering Exchange (NIPX) to keep local data traffic in the country - a step forward in achieving data sovereignty.

As the country's first neutral and open Internet Exchange Point (IXP), the NIPX creates a strategic national platform where Internet Service Providers (ISPs), content providers, cloud platforms, data centres, and government networks can interconnect and exchange internet traffic directly within Uganda.

For years, domestic internet traffic was channelled through the expensive global routes, leaving Uganda's borders only to return, resulting in higher costs, increased latency, and reduced efficiency. The new NIPX brings an end to this long-standing inefficiency by keeping local traffic local, laying a stronger foundation for a faster and more resilient national internet ecosystem.

The number of Internet subscribers has risen from 17.9 million to over 30 million subscribers over the same period, indicating an increase in Internet adoption.



A woman uses a smartphone to access Internet. The new exchange is a digital infrastructure development designed to keep local internet traffic within Uganda.

PHOTO/EGARR. BATTE

Speaking during the launch, Kenneth Bagarukayo, the Commissioner for research and development at the Ministry of ICT and National Guidance, highlighted how the newly commissioned NIPX positions Uganda as an ICT Hub. "The NIPX positions Uganda as a credible and competitive ICT hub within the East African region and beyond.

This modern infrastructure will help attract both local and international investment, drive innovation, encourage the creation of local digital content, and open new opportunities for our young people and entrepreneurs." Richard Obita, director of technical services at NITA-U, explained the platform's unique design and ex-

Investment

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pected impact. NIPX has been established as a neutrally owned institution. It is collectively owned by its members for the benefit of all, with shared governance that ensures no single entity, including the government, holds a controlling interest.

According to Richard Obita, director technical services at NITA-U, "This model creates a genuine level playing field for all participants, from the largest operators to emerging providers," he stated.

Mr Obita further highlighted that NIPX is a step in achieving data sovereignty. "Right now, most of the emerging technologies including Artificial Intelligence, rely on data. He who owns it can make mon-

ey out of it if there are no safeguards." Obita cited the recent elections where the country was plunged in an Internet shut down for close to two weeks. If you had such an exchange, it would enable local connections and data sharing intact without disrupting the flow of work among some corporations, say news organisations.

Godfrey Sserwamukoko, chairman of the Internet Service Providers Association of Uganda (ISPAU), expressed strong support during the launch workshop. "The NIPX provides a neutral and open platform that can optimise local traffic exchange and bring cost efficiencies to the industry," he said.

