

Govt to buy local ICT innovations – Rugunda

By Edward Kayiwa

Prime Minister Dr Ruhakana Rugunda has said the Government will purchase ITC applications that are created locally in its bid to improve service delivery ahead of the Vision 2020.

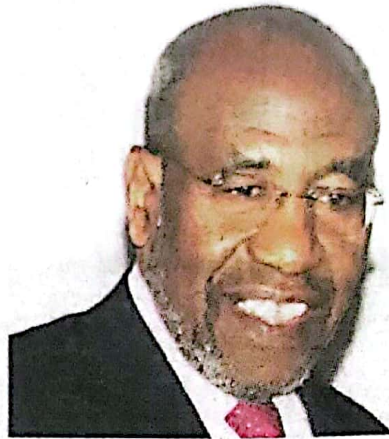
The Prime Minister said most of the applications will be purchased from the National Innovation Hub, which was set up to develop and nurture ideas from local innovators.

"We have made a lot of efforts to develop the information communications infrastructure, which has created a conducive communication environment for fast social and economic development. We believe we should develop and adopt ICTs for smarter cities, education, environment, agriculture, healthcare and commerce," Rugunda said while addressing the 22nd East African Communications Organisation (EACO) congress at the Silver Springs Hotel in Bugolobi, Kampala recently.

EACO is a regional organisation that brings together national ICT regulators, operators, services providers, ICT training institutions and other stakeholders in the communication sector within Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, South Sudan and Uganda.

It aims at strengthening and promoting co-operation among the five EAC countries in the development and provision of postal, telecommunication and broadcasting services.

He said the ICT innovation support programme, under the National Innovation Hub, is expected to enhance growth of ICT skills and innovation across the country.



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According to the ICT ministry, the programme is expected to link the Government to ICT innovators and also inculcate the culture of creativity and analytical thinking.

Rugunda said the Government has set ICTs as one of the strategic intervention areas in meeting the country's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), adding that ICTs will also be purchased under the Buy Uganda, Build Uganda programme.

He said the Government, through the National Information Technology Authority (NITA) Uganda, is in the process of certifying ICT innovators to enhance procurement of ICT services locally within the public sector, which is the biggest consumer.

The ICT minister, Frank Tumwebaze, noted the need to harmonise cross-border rates and identifying the push factors on costs in order to make the rates affordable to encourage innovation.

"It is not good to assume that the current costs are affordable across borders

to everybody. But if we can achieve harmonisation of cross-boarder rates, we would have reached a fundamental stage of the one area network," he said.

Tumwebaze said ICT facilitation is key in supporting investment and business growth across the various sectors of the economy as Uganda looks towards achieving a middle-income economy status.

The ICT sector in Uganda is vibrant and dynamic and has now turned into an inevitable tool of socio-economic development.

It is also considered by the Government as a primary growth sector as demonstrated in the National Philosophy on ICT document.

According to the Uganda Bureau of Statistics, the sector's contribution to economic growth in terms of gross domestic product stands at 6.5%, while sh225b is still needed to improve ICT infrastructure across the country in order to increase its usage in both rural and urban households.