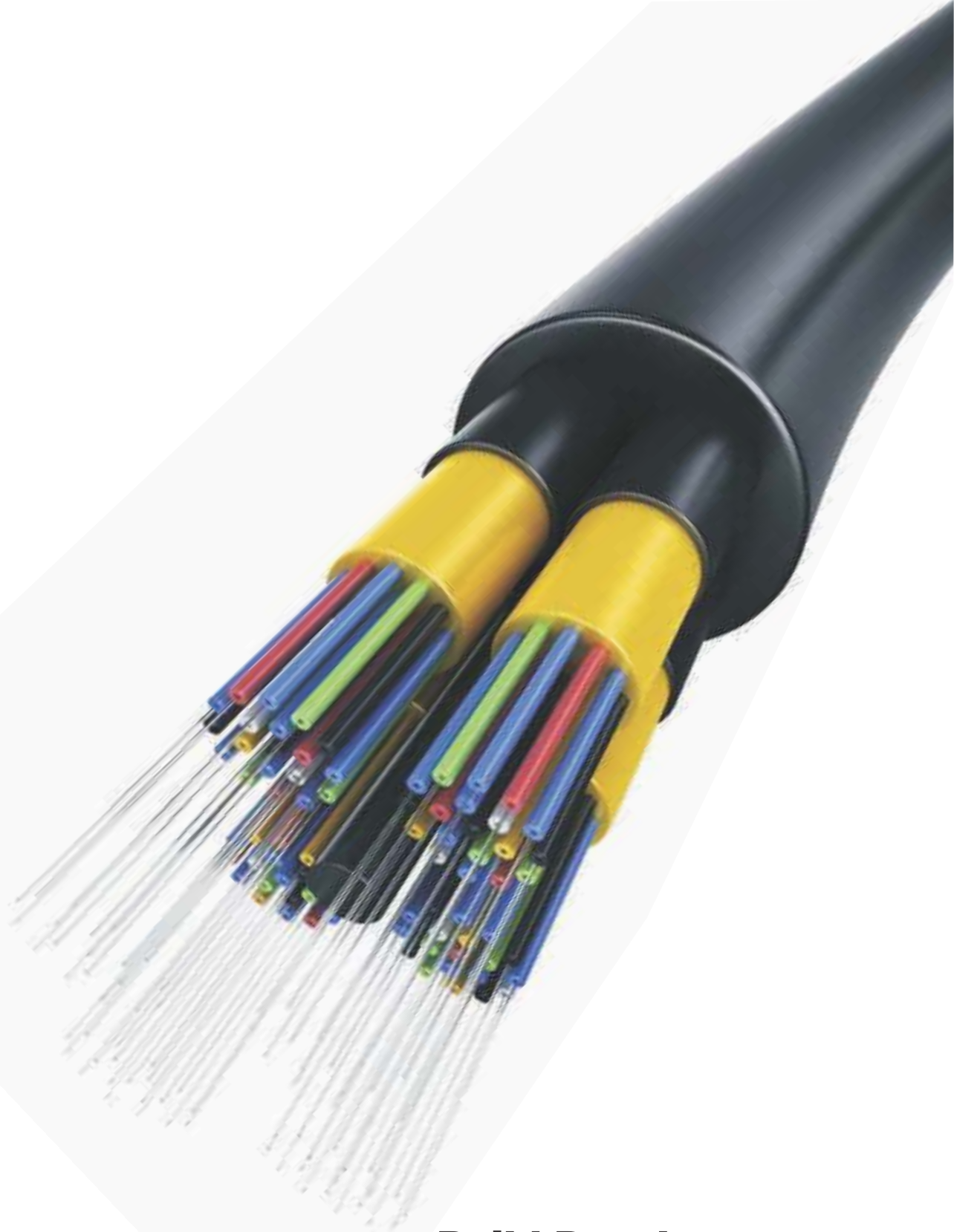Ready! Set! Go!
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opens Tier IV data centre in Kano

Cybercrime is spiking
and security skills are scarce

NDPB is fostering a national culture of compliance to data privacy- Olatunji

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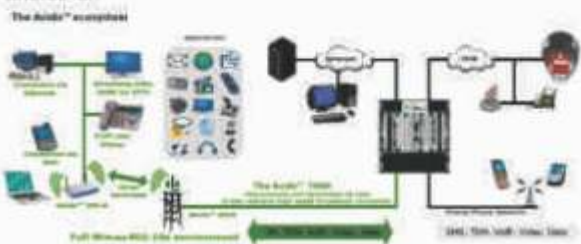
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MEDALLION DATA CENTRES LIMITED

Lagos Data Protection Bill could bring unintended chaos

Last October, the Lagos State Data Protection Bill passed the second reading by the Lagos State Assembly and the following month in November, the legislators had a one-day public hearing to seek stakeholders' input before the bill becomes law as an Act of Parliament.

Lagos has instigated a process that is further interrogating our practice of federalism and just how dynamic sub-national entities should respond to technology and innovation trends that impact heavily on society and economy.

For now, Nigeria's principal legislation for data protection is the Nigeria Data Protection Regulation (NDPR) issued by the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) January 2019 in pursuant to Section 6 (a,c) of the NITDA Act 2007.

The NDPR is the most comprehensive law under which data protection is practiced in Nigeria and offenders sanctioned. The NDPR provides to safeguard the rights of natural persons to data privacy; and to foster safe conduct for any legal transactions among others.

Most importantly, the NDPR has helped to foster a data protection industry steadily on the rise with more than 100 licensed operators and increasing awareness of compliance to data protection guidelines for public and private organisations.

It is a nascent industry on the pathway of achieving the new mantra that data is the new oil. The Global Data Protection Market valued at $77.31 million in 2019 is projected to reach $257.52 million by 2027.The 2019 projection has long given way to more realistic figures as the data protection industry has grown in leaps. According to Yahoo Finance in a much recent report, the Global Data Protection as a Service Market is expected to grow by $20.69 billion during 2021-2025.

In Nigeria, it has grown from zero in 2019 to become an industry valued in excess of N5 billion. The industry has recorded hyper growth in less than 24 months even though less than 5% of the market is even aware of its existence. The potential for exponential growth is real and certain.

For all these reasons, stakeholders must not be unwary to the potential of what the Lagos data protection bill as a law will have on the industry. Lagos raises the question of who has authority or final jurisdiction over data protection. Local governments, states, or federal governments? It appears we are approaching the same level of interrogation and dilemma we are presently contending with over the issue of VAT [Value Added Tax]. Will a Lagos law on data protection not incite duplicity? Are we going to ultimately end up with 36 jurisdictional powers over data protection? Will data subject, perpetually on the move; and data controllers or aggregators be subject to 36 data protection commissions in addition to those of local governments and federal government?

The attempt to advance the gains of the NDPR with a Data Protection Bill 2020 appears to have stalled. Among others, the Bill is designed to incorporate elements of the NDPR and strengthen the existing regulatory framework with an Act of Parliament for the protection and processing of personal data and to safeguard the rights and freedoms of data subjects which are guaranteed under the Nigerian Constitution.

While the federal government dithers over enacting an Act for data protection, Lagos is instigating a new level of thinking and actions around the data protection industry. Stakeholders must wake up to the unfolding realities and begin to make urgent demands that will not jeopardize an industry in its formative stage.

The data industry is a new reality worldwide and Yes! jurisdictions appear to just be waking up to having a common approach to the challenges. In the US, a federation, as one report notes, "there are no federal privacy laws regulating many companies, they're pretty much free to do what they want with the data, unless a state has its own data privacy law. In most states, companies can use, share, or sell any data they collect about you without notifying you that they're doing so."

But there is already a federal data protection Act in the offing. In 28 Jun 2021, a U.S. Senator presented a bill to create an independent federal Data Protection Agency (DPA) to protect individuals' data, safeguard their privacy and ensure that data practices are fair and transparent.

No doubt, the U.S. Data Protection Act would create a federal data privacy oversight agency which the Nigerian equivalent is designed to also provide. It is time to wake up all stakeholders including the Association of Licensed Data Protection Compliance Organisations of Nigeria (ALDAPCON) and the policy makers in NITDA, and elsewhere to articulate a common front to save the data protection industry from un intended chaos.

Olusegun Ohimeh Oruame
Editor

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iTedge news.ng

ISSN 2350 - 2126

Published as Technology Business & Analyses Magazine Since 2004

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"We are committed to smart deployment of infrastructure across Nigeria"
– Danbatta

It is my pleasure to welcome you to this momentous auction that will herald a new era in mobile technology services deployment in Nigeria. Today's auction is momentous in many regards and will usher Nigeria into the exclusive league of countries providing 5G service across the globe.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I am particularly pleased to be associated with this auction process because when His Excellency President Muhammadu Buhari, GCFR, brought us on board in the year 2015, we took a decision to reposition the Commission on a path that will ensure the uptake of all the opportunities that abound in the communications sector.

We committed ourselves to Deepen broadband penetration, protect the consumers and the smart deployment of infrastructure across the country. We further committed ourselves to strategically play our unique role in driving the digital economy to support the government's economic diversification agenda. Consequently, we ensured the implementation of policies for effective communications resource management, strategic collaboration and partnership, facilitating broadband penetration and improvement of Quality of Service (QoS)/Quality of Experience. Through

these initiatives and efforts, the Commission ensured participation in International Telecommunication Union (ITU) activities and other international fora to keep abreast with global development in the Communications sector.

The Commission has also developed Strategic Vision Plan, Strategic Management Plan as well as implemented the National Broadband Plan (NBP) and the National Digital Economy Plan and Strategy (NDEPS). These Plans were supported and facilitated by the immense contributions of the Honourable Minister of Communications and Digital economy Prof Isa Ali Ibrahim Pantami.

The Honourable Minister has been a driver and facilitator of all the initiatives of the Commission and his leadership of the Sector has been an invaluable ingredient in all the attainments of the last two years.

At this juncture, we remember all the international engagements, particularly the World Radiocommunications Conference (WRC -19), where hamonized Frequency Spectrum bands were allocated for the deployment of 5G technology.

Further to these allocations at the international level, approval was granted for 5G trial in Nigeria in November, 2019 and following the favourable outcome, the approval of Nigeria 5G Deployment Policy was equally granted by the Federal Government on September 8, 2021.

Hence today's auction represents a culmination off all the efforts at the international and national levels that have prepared Nigeria tor this momentous leap forward.

Therefore, in line with the 5G Deployment Policy and global best practices, the Commission has set in motion the process for the auction and will be offering two (2) lots in the 3.5GHz band with three (3) companies competing to acquire a licence for the available lots.

The auction is based on the powers bestowed on the Commission by Section 121 of the Nigerian Communications Act 2003 as well as the Licensing Regulations 2019.

Conclusively, I will ike to assure you of our commitment to a transparent and fair Auction process.

Once gain I welcome you all the 3.5GHz spectrum band auction.

Welcome address by Executive Vice Chairman/CEO, Nigerian Communications Commission, Prof. U.G. Danbatta at the 3.5ghz spectrum auction.

We are promoting sustainable digital communities across Africa, says ADEF's Teniola

By Oluwaseun Ajayi

President of the Africa Digital Economy Forum (ADEF), Olusola Teniola, this week in Lagos, said ADEF is working towards building a digital economy that will create new job opportunities for the youths and engage them in building sustainable digital communities across the continent.

Teniola said ADEF is fostered on collaborations with key stakeholders to harness new efforts at ensuring the continent's active participation in the global digital economy.

Founded at the peak of the Covid-19 pandemic, ADEF is a non-profit initiative geared towards the realisation of full digitization of Africa's economies. It draws from a pool of local, international experts and organizations that play in the digital technology space including government bodies and C-level executives in the digital sector.

"Each of the 54 countries in Africa has just started their digital economy journey, so we have an opportunity as ADEF to encourage those multinationals that cut across different countries in Africa, those little society organizations and as well as governments that are willing to leverage digital transformations; share a common goal to drive Africa's clearly defined digital economy agenda and create employment for our youth," said Teniola to IT Edge News in an interview.

He added: "We do not want to make the same mistakes in the past where lots of technology provided by manufacturers from outside Africa pulled all the talents, wealth and also removed jobs out of Africa into their own economy. We have another opportunity under the Africa Digital Economy Forum to ensure that we are building a future for the youths in Africa."

The ADEF draws outstanding support from across the continent and drives digitization across Africa through four channels, namely; intelligence, advocacy, campaigning and fundraising.

"Our commitment makes it essential for us to engage the youths across the continent and create opportunity for them because they are the future. Since Africa is already talking about broadband for over a decade and quite a number of nations are using broadband plans, it is important to make sure that across the demographics everyone including government is actually working together to engage the youths and create a true digital community that benefits Africa," said the president of ADEF.

According to him, through multi-stakeholders' approach, ADEF is pushing commitments to the expansion of connectivity, access to affordable data, promotion of innovation and full digitalization of African nations' economies as the basis for development.

Teniola who also serves as the Nigeria's National Coordinator of the Alliance for Affordable Internet, a global coalition working to drive down the cost of internet access in low and middle-income countries through policy, said broadband challenges are not insurmountable.

The key is collaboration, said Teniola who is also the immediate president of the Association of Telecommunications Companies of Nigeria (ATCON, the umbrella body for ICT companies in Nigeria.

"We are still at a very early stage and to be true to ourselves, there are different organization out there to engage with, I think that's something we are starting, we recognize many foundations in West Africa and South Africa and in Morocco as well that will lead honest capability and capacities. Our objectives are to continually engage and collaborate. We need to pull other organisations together to go further.

"So in terms of our objectives and our goals, I think the first one in terms of priority is engagement."

Africa's e-government efforts are bearing fruit

- Sunil Geness, Director: Global Government Affairs & CSR at SAP Africa

Following the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on governments and citizens, countries across the African continent are looking at e-government with renewed interest and urgency.

In its latest E-Government Survey, the UN notes that governments around the world are looking at new e-government initiatives in their pursuit of digital government transformation. These include the expansion of e-participation, the delivery of e-government as a platform, the innovative use of intelligent technologies to power smart cities, and the adoption of data-centric approaches to service delivery and government policy. E-government is defined as the use of information and communication technologies to transform government services – its processes, procedures and structures – by making it more accessible, effective and accountable.

According to the UN, e-government holds the potential to improve the delivery of public services and is an enabler of effective, transparent and accountable public institutions.

African nations show encouraging growth in e-services

All regions are making progress with developing e-government capabilities, but Africa is showing the greatest growth. The number of UN member states in Africa that have low e-government development index (EGDI) values dropped from 26 in 2016 to only seven in 2020. Sadly, no African country can yet boast very high EGDI values: in Europe, 33 countries have 'very high' EGDI values, and 15 in Asia.

Although lagging more developed regions, Africa has the largest share of countries that have moved to a higher EGDI group of all regions. The African countries with the highest EGDI values are Mauritius, Seychelles, South Africa and Tunisia, who are all in the top 100 globally.

As governments respond to the challenges brought by the pandemic, many are placing greater emphasis on e-government services, which can be evidenced in

- Expanded national portal features
- Improved transactional online services such as tax submissions, license renewals, permits and business registrations
- Greater digitisation of sectoral services in health, employment, justice, employment and social protection
- Extending online services to vulnerable groups including the elderly, persons with disabilities, youth and women.

Sixty-five to seventy percent of African countries allow citizens to

Sunil Geness, Director: Global Government Affairs & CSR at SAP Africa

register a business online, while more than half allow citizens to apply for a government post or request birth, death or marriage certificates.

However, access to digital services remains an obstacle to greater e-government development in Africa. The continent's internet penetration is estimated at 36% – or 473 million people – and digital literacy levels are also comparably lower than more developed regions.

New policies point to data-driven governments

One of the key components of effective e-government is the effective use of government data. With much of the world's data resting in the hands of a small number of global cloud and digital services providers, African nations have taken note of the importance of leveraging data that could be applied in the service of national and regional decision-making and policy development. As one of the most digitally mature of all African nations, South Africa produces huge and growing volumes of personal, public, corporate and government data. Its recently published National Data and Cloud Policy sets out how the government can better use data as a natural resource, mine it for insights, and apply those insights to improve service delivery.

The African Union's Digital Transformation Strategy is also clear in its intention to ensure the continent's ownership of modern digital tools, but with only 1% of the world's data centres, many countries still have some work to do.

Next steps hold key to e-government success

What is the way forward for Africa's e-government growth? The UN believes comprehensive national digital transformation strategies and implementation plans that integrate national priorities with regional and global priorities are essential. Encouragingly, many African countries have taken bold steps forward in this regard. Nigeria has introduced a Government Integrated Financial Management Information System; Mauritius is in the process of establishing a regional e-governance academy; Zimbabwe has enabled a public-sector financial management system; and Ethiopia has connected cash registers at retail outlets directly to the country's tax authority.

The Smart Africa initiative, which was established in 2013, puts ICT at the centre of socio-economic development, encourages greater access to ICT, aims to improve accountability and efficiency through the use of ICT, and more broadly leveraging ICT to promote sustainable development.

The Policy and Regulation Initiative for Digital Africa, a joint programme between the African Union, European Union and International Telecommunication Union, aims to facilitate universally accessible, affordable and effective wireless broadband across the continent, with the ultimate goal of bringing an additional 300 million people in Africa online by 2025. As countries across Africa accelerate their adoption of digital technologies, new opportunities are being created for more efficient and accessible public services that can help establish a more equitable and enabling environment for citizens and businesses alike.

Building on the success of the past few years, countries can take bold steps toward greater regional and global competitiveness while enhancing the citizen experience for all who call Africa home.

Pantami stresses Nigeria's focus on human capital development at World Bank's forum on digital skills

Minister of Communications and Digital Economy, Professor Isa Ali Ibrahim Pantami has reiterated government's commitment to promoting human capital development, notably digital skills, among young Nigerians through partnerships with strategic global institutions.

Professor Pantami was speaking as the Special Guest during a virtual workshop organised by the World Bank on Digital Skills Roadmap.

"We are championing a paradigm shift with emphasis on skills, particularly digital skills over merely having degrees without skills.," said Pantami at the virtual meeting.

He added: "A digital economy cannot be developed in silos and that is why the Federal Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy has entered into mutually beneficial partnerships with global technology giants and institutions in order to empower our citizens, with the requisite skills to become employers, rather than employees in the long run".

The minister also disclosed that over 500,000 Nigerians have so far benefitted from digital skills empowerment programmes at various levels, initiated and driven by the ministry and the parastatals under its purview.

According to a statement by minister's spokesperson, Uwa Suleiman, the collaboration between the two institutions will provide technical assistance to the Nigerian government to advance its quest for digital skills as captured in the National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy (NDEPS).

The World Bank has been in partnership with the Federal Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy in the development of Nigeria's digital economy since President Muhammadu Buhari launched the NDEPS document in November of 2019.

NITDA empowers 60 rural women on ict in Jigawa

The National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA), in conjunction with the Federal Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy, has concluded a four-day capacity building of Women on ICT Techprenuership in Dutse, Jigawa state capital, where 60 brand new HP laptops were presented to all participants who were drawn from various local governments within the state.

The training is part of NITDA's nation-wide capacity building on digital literacy for youths and women across the country. It is designed as part of efforts in bridging the digital divide in the country through the implementation of the National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy (NDEPS).

Digital literacy and skills, which is a key pillar in the agency's Strategic Road Map and Action Plan (SRAP) 2021-2024 has remained a key focus of the agency under its Director General, Kashifu Inuwa Abdullahi, in ensuring the acquisition of digital skills across different works of life as well as support the goal of achieving 95% digital literacy level in the next ten years.

The Governor of Jigawa State, Badaru Abubakar, who was represented by the Special Assistant on Economic Empowerment, Malam Muhammed Mujaddadi, commended NITDA's commitment to innovation-driven enterprises for micro, small and medium enterprises to thrive.

NDPB is hinged on developmental regulation

 Months ago, President Muhammadu Buhari approved the establishment of the Nigeria Data Protection Bureau (NDPB) and the appointment of Dr. Vincent Olatunji as the pioneer National Commissioner/Chief Executive Officer of the

Bureau. The privacy watchdog has since set to build a data protected Nigeria under the leading of the Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy, its supervisory ministry headed by Minister of Communications and Digital Economy, Prof Isa Ali Ibrahim Pantami. The NDPB is faced with regulating a nascent market grappling with awareness, challenges and struggling to come to terms with a mix of regulatory and technology frameworks benchmarked on best global practice for which all economic actors in Nigeria are expected to imbibe a new culture of compliance. In this interview with *IT Edge News,* **Olatunji expresses conviction that accelerated datafication of our society has increased the importance of having an institution that focuses on regulating data protection and privacy. He says Nigeria's data economy offers new social and business opportunities and imposes certain obligations on all actors. He says it is the mandate of the NDPB to ensure that, in terms of data protection, everybody is safe and there is confidence in the entire data protection sector. The Bureau is fostering a "culture of compliance to issues of data privacy" across all sectors and among all stakeholders, the data protection ombudsman tells Olusegun Oruame, Christabel Ume and Lovebanks Omale Ruh'Allah.**

The Bureau recently announced it was investigating two major data controllers, Wema Bank PLC and KC Gaming Networks (Bet Naija) over possible breaches. Should organisations fear or should they look up to the Bureau for advice or guidance?

I think it's both. People feel or say at times that regulating the digital economy sector is not necessary. They see it from the perspective of creating unnecessary roadblocks to development. But everything is geared at achieving the National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy (NDEPS). What we have is developmental regulation. We are regulating to enhance development, to stimulate the ecosystem and make it yield to socioeconomic development and that is why even the issue of data protection regulation itself has helped to generate a lot of jobs, wealth, international recognition and even having its ecosystem recognised internationally in a way that has enhanced the reputation of the country. So we are not regulating to create unnecessary roadblocks or to stiffen development in the sector. We regulate by both advisory and sanctions. But we are more focused not on sanction but advisory in the sense that we want to create a culture of compliance; that nobody is forcing you to comply, you see compliance as what you need to do. Our focus is regulation or compliance by design or by default. Right from the time you're developing your data base, how you want to manage it when you're at the planning stage, you would have incorporated the idea of data privacy, data protection by number one: putting in place appropriate technological measures, in terms of the appropriate software; in terms of even the physical infrastructure that you have. Also, you put in place appropriate regulatory measures, that is, what are the available regulations within the country and outside the country that are in the area of guiding data protection or data privacy.

How does a data protection officer (DPO) fit into the picture?

That's why the idea of having a data protection officer (DPO) comes into being. He must be sound, he must be knowledgeable enough about the laws of data privacy and protection inside and outside the country to be able to guide the organisation, to advise the organisation on the area of awareness, capacity building, the measures put in place, and ensure that all these measures are in compliance with the provision of the law. So that is why we are saying, "comply by culture, by design, by default." If that is the case, by the time you make your checks, do your data audit from time to time, and do your data protection impact assessment; you would have achieved a self-review of your entire system to ensure compliance to every segment of regulation.

More importantly, if you are a processor in charge of huge volume of data, your DPO is very important to ensure you do these things from time to time, allowing you to know the areas of non-conformity, and ensuring you put in place measures that will move the organisation from non-conformity to conformity. Any data within your domain must conform to set guidelines whether concerning the issue of confidentiality, the issue of integrity of the data, the issue of availability. These are very fundamental. How you collect data, store data, the content of the data, how you process the data, how long do you want to process or store the data, how you are protecting the data - all these are issues you need to address by law.

By introducing what we call Data Protection Compliance Organization (DPCOs), we brought an advisory innovation to bear on the industry. DPCOs offer compliance as a service. They help data controllers to move from non-conformity to conformity status. They go there to take you through 63 parameters that are divided into four that include governance and accountability, or if

"But we are more focused not on sanction but advisory in the sense that we want to create a culture of compliance; that nobody is forcing you to comply, you see compliance as what you need to do."

you so wish, accuracy, storage limitation, integrity and confidentiality (security) – all of these within the entire framework of ensuring conformity to the existing regulations.

The DPOs and DPCOs take you through all these parameters out of sixty three you may not be able to score 100%, if you're doing very well they score you great , if you're in between they give you average, if it is really bad ,they give you Red. They then help you to put in place measures to move you from Red to average; by the time they are coming back, they expect you to have put in place measures to ensure that you move from non-conformity to conformity. That's the advisory in nature that we are focused on here at the Bureau.

Organisations are under obligations to report data breaches?
Now, if there are breaches, they must be investigated. There are different types of breaches; some are unintentional, you are not aware of them; they might be through a staff or through a system upgrade, etc. These are unintentional breaches and what you need to do as a data processor is to commence immediate remediation and officially report to us at the Bureau between 8-72 hours. You must report to the Bureau within 72 hours. If you cannot give a full report you must write to inform us why you cannot give a full report within that time frame. In the absence of that we can come and by the time we are coming, we are not coming with sanction. The first thing to do is to write to you; to make you aware that have learnt that there was a breach on your data base , what happened, when did the breach occur, the

nature of the breach, etc. How many data subjects are affected by the breach, what is the cost or implication to the data subject, what is the cost to your own regulation, what remedial actions have you taken, Have you done any audit filing, Have you done DPIA? These are questions that we will ask you. By the time you answer the questions; and the responses are satisfactory, then we just warn you to put in place this or that measure. We are not really after sanctions or imposing fines, but when we find out that the breach is deeper than it is being portrayed, we go further to do forensic audit. We audit your entire system, your database and if you are found wanting, there are penalties stipulated and these are not peculiar to Nigeria alone as it is the same approach all over the world. The regulator's role begins with advisory. There are structures in place to advice all stakeholders and applying the Data Protection Regulations (DPRs) and there are DPOs and DPCOs to take you through compliance. And should there be a breach, you are under obligations to report to us as we must also ask questions before it actually gets to the level of sanction. Imposing sanctions go through a lot of processes.

Nigeria Data Protection Regulation (NDPR), the country's principal law for data privacy came into effect in 2019 but your Bureau was only created this year 2022. Part of the debate by some organisations including thousands of banks and other corporate entities is that there is still little or no awareness on the NDPR. What is the Bureau doing so everybody gets that awareness to ensure compliance?
Some people came by this afternoon and part of the argument was that we didn't involve them when we licensed the DPCOs, and that the issue of data privacy is not for lawyers, it is for core tech people. My answer to them was that this is just an evolving sector; it's an emerging sector in Nigeria. I'm not sure we have up to 25,000 people with core competency in data protection in Nigeria or who have their certification in data protection. But data processors, data controllers are more than 500,000 in Nigeria. We can see the huge gap. We still have a deficit of 475,000 of professionals with capacity to manage the nascent industry. We recognised that the issue of awareness is really key and even while we were under NITDA, we started awareness and with the support of the DPCOs, we got some traction. For instance, when we did the initial audit filing report, we were able

to receive only 630 audit filing and if we look at CAC registered companies, there are about 3.1 million corporate entities. But things are gradually improving. The following year it increased to 1230 and it is on the rise. There are over 800 government ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) and at least, 500 of them are fully captured in the data protection registry, even if it's their staff alone, their vendors, their customers and those who are in data processing. All of these groups are now aware of their obligations to data subjects in terms of how to secure the data, how to manage it, how to process it, and how they are to share it including an understanding of the consent of the data subject. The focus also includes the data subject, do they even know their right? Are they aware that if their data are collected, their consent is required? And you're talking of over 200 million people who constitute data subjects in Nigeria spread across Nigeria's huge landmass. We accept in the Bureau that in terms of awareness we have a great task and we are committed to bringing everybody along. We are taking the message to every actor in the sector. We just came back from NCDC, they are huge in terms of data controllers. We've been to Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), National Identity Management

Commission (NIMC), Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) and NIGCOMSAT Ltd, and several other MDAs including major government data controllers and this is what we tend to do, then later we go to private companies. But we need to commend the private companies because the level of their compliance is higher than the public sector and that's why we are starting with public sector. The query issued to Wema Bank and Bet Naija is part of the awareness too. Now, some people are already aware that there is a body that can actually rise up and say we want to investigate you over data breaches as empowered by law to so act. So, you cannot just do whatever you like and get away with it. No! Things have changed!

What are the strategies of the Bureau to address the awareness gaps?
Even beyond awareness, we are trying to have a strategic plan; the roadmap of 2023-2028 for us to know what we need to do, how do we get these things done, who are the stakeholders required to drive the roadmap? The roadmap will address issues of timelines, funding because awareness creation requires funding. Hopefully before the end of the year, we would be able to get inputs of various stakeholders through a strategic committee and validate our action plan. At the moment, we are already working to move beyond subsidiary legislation as a Bureau to an Act and so we are already working with the World Bank, Global Development Bank, and are involving all stakeholders to ensure that whatever we are producing is for Nigerians and it adequately captures our peculiar culture benchmarked against best global standards such as the European Union GDPR [EU Data Protection Regulation].

As the head of a new agency addressing very novel issues of data privacy, what are your ultimate goals for the Bureau in another 12 months?
To ensure that data subjects in Nigeria know their rights; that data processors in Nigeria know their obligations to data subjects; stakeholders are aware of what they need to do; to

ensure that in terms of data protection, everybody is safe and there is confidence in the entire data protection sector; and to a large extent, we continue to build that positive international reputation to be seen as a country of serious people who know their rights when it comes to the issue of their data privacy. Also, to connect the objectives of data protection and to building a robust digital economy that is vital to capacity building as I had earlier mentioned. The data protection sector in Nigeria is young and the market is huge but grossly underserved. There are few data protection certified professionals so we need to build the capacity of our staff and of people, unemployed graduates who can be trained to become certified and close the skill gaps. Our target is to train 50,000 data officers in 12 months so in five years we are looking at 250,000 certified professionals in Nigeria. Of course, we cannot do this alone so we are fostering partnerships to drive our goals.

It would appear the Bureau is exploring partnerships with foreign governments like Finland and multinational like Facebook to build capacity and all that.
Finland is among the EU countries that has achieved so much in data protection. It is a small country but mighty in several ways. It will surprise you that they are only about 5.5 million in terms of population but their passport is topnotch in the whole world. Their passport can enter 175 countries visa free. They have a lot of data coverage because of Nokia, a homegrown country. Their application of the GDPR with local supplementary Act on data protection is the model not only for Europe but the rest of world. We are leveraging on all of these to learn from them and also share experiences with them. For instance, and it may surprise you, the issue of DPOs is original to us and we are sure other countries are studying our model to learn from us and how to apply the model. Knowledge sharing is important in this industry as a global one. We are already talking to Singapore which set up its own certification processes in 2013; we are talking of having a network of African data protection authorities in the 34 countries of the 54 countries on the continent.

CHOGM 2022: MTN applauds Pantami over Nigeria's 5G roadmap

Chairman of MTN Group, Mr. Mcebisi Jonas and the Group's CEO, Mr. Ralph Mupita have commended the Minister of Communications and Digital Economy, Prof Isa Ali Ibrahim Pantami for Nigeria's 5G roadmap.

Pantami met with the duo during a side meeting at the 2022 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, also known as CHOGM 2022, taking place in Kigali, Rwanda.

MTN Nigeria and little known Mafab Communications Ltd emerged as the two successful winners of the 3.5 gigahertz (GHz) spectrum auction for the deployment of 5G technology in Nigeria December.

The operators are expexcted to commence delivery of 5G services before ending of Q3, 2022.

In Kigali, "the leadership of MTN

expressed their gratitude to the minister for his support towards creating an enabling environment for MTN to thrive in its largest global market- Nigeria.

"In particular, they commended the minister for the successful 5G auctioning and licensing process and they assured the Minister of their willingness to roll out 5G services in Nigeria as soon as possible,"

said Dr Femi Adeluyi, Technical Assistant (Research and Development) to Prof Pantami.

The statement addded: "The MTN team also officially informed the minister of their decision to hold their next Board Retreat in Nigeria in July 2022. This, they said, is in recognition of the positive impact of Nigeria on their business.

Pandemic drives need for technology adoption among SMEs but barriers remain

HIGHLIGHTS

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) represent more than 90% of all companies globally and are the primary drivers of social mobility, creating 7 out of 10 jobs

A new report by the World Economic Forum shows an increase in the number of SMEs seeking digital technology to overcome challenges caused by the pandemic

Despite the increase in demand, many SMEs encounter barriers to adopting technologies that are critical to long-term competitiveness

A survey by World Economic Forum indicates that the COVID-19 pandemic has increased demand for more adoption and integration of digital technology among small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs). However, they face numerous barriers to adopting technology at a critical time of need.

While 97% of global companies have accelerated adoption of technology to get through the pandemic the Forum's survey indicates that only 23% of SMEs were able to dedicate resources to new digital tools. SMEs are still scrambling to meet mandated health and safety measures, threatening their ability to stay operational.

"Three years ago, the Government of Brazil sounded an alarm on the urgent need to help support the modernization and competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises," said Jeff Merritt, Head of Urban Transformation for the World Economic Forum. "The COVID-19 pandemic has amplified these challenges, underscoring the need for collective action from the public and private sector across the globe."

"Having a better understanding on how COVID-19 is impacting SMEs is critical to the world economy," said Lucas Camara, Executive Director of the Centre for the Fourth Industrial Revolution, Brazil.

SMEs represent more than 90% of all companies globally and are the primary drivers of social mobility, creating 7 out of 10 jobs. Unfortunately, these companies are struggling to embrace the Fourth Industrial Revolution, endangering their own comparativeness in a global economy. The pandemic further emphasized the importance of business to be flexible and agile, and yet these digital resiliency tools are out of reach.

"The pandemic made it clear for many SMEs that to remain relevant, they must adapt quickly to our new reality and adopt technology that will allow them to stay in business," said Erez Zaionce, Head of the Centre for the Fourth Industrial Revolution, Colombia.

The survey of 141 SMEs from six countries that are part of the World Economic Forum's Fourth Industrial Revolution Network – Azerbaijan, Brazil, Colombia, Kazakhstan, South Africa and Turkey – shows heightened demand among SMEs to integrate digital technology in business operations, particularly related to the industrial internet of things (IIoT), cloud computing, big data and artificial intelligence.

When asked about the different use cases most SMEs expressed interest in deploying technology to optimize processes, ensure safety and security, facilitate quality management, and manage workforce training and collaboration. Given the low level of automation and digitalization among SMEs, the report suggests an outsized opportunity for SMEs and digital solution providers to collaborate.

Despite the increase in interest in digital technology, only 23% of SMEs surveyed have said that the changes brought upon by the pandemic have led to the acceleration of their digitalization goals. While some of this investment was shelved due to the economic impact of the pandemic, the survey points towards the continued existence of barriers for a wider adoption of technology among SMEs. This includes limited availability and access to financial resources, lack of a skilled workforce and infrastructure to support digitalization.

Policy-makers have an important role to play in reducing barriers, aligning incentives for different stakeholders and creating an environment conducive to wider adoption and deeper integration of digital technology among SMEs. This will not only save jobs but also create new ones by raising awareness, supporting upskilling, providing financial assistance and building a collaborative environment to encourage wider adoption of technology.

"One of the priority directions of C4IR Kazakhstan is the implementation of IoT in various sectors of the economy," said Pavel Koktyshev, Acting Head of the Centre for the Fourth Industrial Revolution, Kazakhstan. "The centre has already formed partnerships with regional leaders and continues to work on forming a regulatory environment and a favourable ecosystem. These initiatives are effective on a country scale and provide great support for the recovery and sustainable development of SMEs after the pandemic."

PICTDA - Lalong's vision to foster Plateau on youth, technology and politics

It is three now years since Governor Simon Bako Lalong took one of his most defining steps in bringing young people into governance and politics with the appointment of Daser David as Director General of the newly established Plateau State ICT Development Agency (PICTDA). PICTDA already had its mandates cut out for it by the Plateau State House of Assembly as a statutory agency. Indeed, it will set precedence as one of the early efforts in northern Nigeria, and

perhaps all of Nigeria, to have an ICT regulatory and development agency backed up by an Act of Parliament and not just a patch-thread department in the Governor's Office for doling out favours to loyal party members.

Legislators gave the statutory stamp for PICTDA and the executive went shopping for youth and knowledge. It found one in a young entrepreneur, a political tabula rasa, keen on driving a tech vision around the consensual belief that the future of Plateau is hinged on youth and technology amongst several other factors. In 36 months, PICTDA has embodied the opportunities, challenges and required steadfastness to make policy-actions drive ICT goals at a sub-national level.

A replica of the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) at state level, PICTDA has had to contend with acute lack of fund even in the midst of multitude of aspirations. But the significant thing is that there is a statutory framework for local and (inter)national engagements of opportunities and partners within the realm of ICT for which Plateau state should be grateful as it quietly, even agonizingly, navigates the terrains to achieve its mandate in PICTDA. In addition to building tech-capacity in young people, PICTDA is statutorily established to oversee equitable rollout of robust ICT facility throughout the state; encourage adoption of new technologies to increase efficiencies and create positive impacts across sectors, ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) in the state; foster good governance and control over ICT aided work processes; as well as promote global-best policies to drive ICT-investments in Plateau state.

But perhaps, PICTDA's greatest achievements and in spite of its challenges, to Lalong's credit, will be the unreserved commitment to building ICT capacity in young people and raising the awareness for tech-innovation across sectors and MDAs in Plateau state. In the last three years, PICTDA has through the Code Plateau built a platform and a brand focused on human capacity development targeting young people. Code Plateau is helping to build an army of techies, soft skill experts expected to find their feet in the digital economy. The Code Plateau framework has created the exigencies for partnerships and collaborations specifically streamlined to filling skills and job gaps in an innovative way. Many private sector players are increasingly getting enlisted as partners of

the Code Plateau. Since it started gaining traction, PICTDA has had its eyes set on the World Bank for possible cooperation to expand the benefits of Code Plateau to more young people particularly the female gender steadily recording a positive rise in interest to seek new careers in ICT.

The growing success of Code Plateau is an affirmation that: "when there is little or no money to burn, ideas and innovations could be born to drive real growth.

But PICTDA needs support to sustain the Code Plateau initiative as part of the framework for development of ICT as an industry which is vital to the economic growth of Plateau and Nigeria as a whole.

At sub-national level, the PICTDA has inspired and driven policy directions that include ICT compliance requirements to allow the agency effectively regulate IT projects in the state and ensure protection of local IT companies in compliance with the regulations for promotion of local content.

More than ever before, PICTDA has ensured a platform for statewide consultation with stakeholders on IT policy and guidelines helping to raise the pedestal for ICT awareness.

The agency has also provided the bastion for Rural Technology Outreach, a digital education initiative designed to create awareness and offer basic instructions to mass of the people at the grassroots on digital skills and its benefits.

Plateau has an encouraging level of compliance with the Nigeria Data Protection Regulation (NDPR), 2019 – a national data protection guideline for all public and private entities engaging citizens' data in Nigeria. Compliance with the NDPR is a prerequisite to enlist in the global digital economy.

Despite the headwinds, there is a gradual institutional acceptance of ICT in all public MDAs as a way of improving governance, quality of lives and delivery of services to citizens with Lalong as the prime mover of this change. The governor has his vision and belief in young people to thank for this. He is in the same pathway with President Cyril Ramaphosa of South Africa who has consistently expressed his conviction that Africa's future is in youth and technology. For young people to be effctive leaders in politics, Ramaphosa believes that young people need foundational cognitive skills in science, technology engineering and mathematics (STEM), the foundational knowledge upon which Code Plateau is built.

Lalong can further borrow some wise-cracks from President Olusegun Obasanjo. The former president told his audience in a recent meet that young people are the lifeblood of Africa's emerging political realm. Two elections in The Gambia and Zambia have affirmed that fact. Young people decided and gave the responsibility for power and leadership to those that eventually won.

In Plateau state, Lalong may have inadvertently made a good mix of those wise cracks in his choice three years ago to carefully foster PICTDA on youth, technology and politics – where political willpower truly matters to making technology and innovation possible.

Cybersecurity will get more monstrous; 5G networks will get hotter and crowded

– Strand Consult

Strand Consult has followed the mobile telecom industry for more than 25 years and has published predictions for the last 21. See the collection. This research note reviews the highs and lows from the mobile telecom industry in 2021 and makes predictions for 2022. This past year developed very differently from other years but was not so different from 2020.

In 2020 we claimed that it was an understatement to say that COVID-19 was a game changer. Many of the changes implemented in 2020 have become the new normal. Strand Consult has long described how telecommunications are the foundation for the modern society. Without telecommunications, society would have collapsed from COVID-19. The bottom line is that communications networks built and run by operators are more important than ever. 2021 proved once again this assertion beyond the shadow of a doubt.

We wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year

What happened in 2021 and what's going to happen in 2022.

2021 started with the Consumer Technology Association (CTA), turning its physical event Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas into a digital event. In February, GSMA made its Barcelona Mobile World Congress (MWC) into a combination digital/physical event. Usually MWC attracts about 100,000 guests; in 2021, there were about 20,000 participants, of which only 5,000 came outside Spain

GSMA expects to implement MWC 2022. The question is whether the physical part will be much bigger than what we saw in 2021. Though there are fewer hospitalizations with this wave of COVID, more people become sick and need to stay in bed for at least a week. This will likely impact business negatively, particularly labor-heavy companies. This is likely to impact the physical portion of MWC negatively, as participants are likely to stay home.

2022 will continue to showcase that the mobile telecommunications industry plays a critical role in enabling modern society to work. Telecom companies should receive more goodwill and should become better to exploit it.

At Strand Consult, a lot happened in 2021
Strand Consult enjoyed another busy year working across the continents. Our growing team of experts launched many important reports and research notes. Strand Consult also launched its guest blog universe Telecom Expert Voices and expects to offer more timely and exciting analyses in the coming year.

Strand Consult kicked off its first study of the broadband middle mile and showed that rural broadband providers have many challenges to deliver broadband to disparate customers over large geographic areas. The study creates transparency for policymakers about the cost, level, source of internet traffic. It demonstrates that 5 "Big Streamers" account for a disproportionate share of downstream traffic. For every $1 of revenue earned from the 5 Big Streamers (Netflix, YouTube, Amazon, Disney+ and Microsoft), rural broadband providers incurred $0.48 in middle mile costs (equipment, electricity and labor) which they could not recover from the Big Streamers, end users, or government reimbursement programs.

The Big Streamers have tremendous global market power and ignore broadband providers' requests to negotiate on cost recovery. Moreover the "free" caching solutions proffered by the Big Streamers add costs to networks and only serve proprietary content. Strand Consult observes that there is a pervasive problem of unrecovered cost at the local, national, and international levels which threatens sustainability and undermines policy to close the digital divide. In 2022 Strand Consult will continue to analyze this critical problem.

Many talk about OpenRAN but mobile operators still buy classic RAN
For the last two years, Strand Consult has studied OpenRAN in detail and published extensively on what the technology requires to become a commercial success. OpenRAN is one of the most overhyped technical solutions since the launch of 3G in year 2000. While the OpenRAN promise to cut RAN CAPEX by as much as half does not rise to level of hyperbole that 3G would turn radio spectrum into gold, it comes close.

In December 2020, Strand Consult published a ground-breaking research note on the Chinese influence on the O-RAN Alliance. In August 2021, Nokia paused their work in the group for fear of violating US restrictions on the many Chinese members. Strand Consult has yet to find an OpenRAN proponent who can explain

how the prevalence of 44 Chinese companies in the O-RAN Alliance does not compromise OpenRAN.

OpenRAN is being promoted by industry and governments from the US, Japan, Germany, the United Kingdom, and even Russia as trade policy and enterprise enhancements, though the OpenRAN market itself appears to be growing minimally. The US Executive Branch stopped referring to the O-Ran Alliance in its policy communications and now uses the OpenRAN Policy Coalition, as if it's a technical standards development organization. Yet the OpenRAN website clearly shows that it's an advocacy organization whose purpose is to influence governments on behalf of its member companies.

It is important to understand that OpenRAN and O-RAN are built on-top of 3GPP 4G/5G technologies. They are not solutions that can replace existing networks on a 1:1 basis. Nor do OpenRAN or O-RAN technologies support 2G and 3G, which most of the world still uses for machine2machine communications and telephony. If a legacy operator wants OpenRAN, it must likely maintain two sets of parallel base stations, one for 2G/3G and the other 4G/5G. Running two parallel networks increases rental and energy costs over one network.

If OpenRAN gets the success its proponents predict, it will account for less than 1 percent of the 5G mobile sites in 2025 and not more than 3 percent in 2030. It looks like OpenRAN is too little, too late to make a difference in a world in which operators are deploying 10,000 classic 5G sites every month.

For a critical view of OpenRAN, check out Strand Consult's latest report Debunking 25 Myths of OpenRAN. It provides objectivity and transparency for policymakers and key questions and analysis not available in most mainstream outlets.

At the end of the day, mobile operators' job is to deliver a great network experience to their customers. OpenRAN technologies offer only limited features compared to the 200 3GPP 5G networks launched globally by the end of 2021. In practical terms, you cannot compare the functionality of Rakuten´s in Japan 4G/5G network with the functionality of an American 4G /5G network. The US will evolve further as it upgrades from 3GPP release 15 to release 16 and 17, and Rakuten will probably fall further behind. The OpenRAN claims are even further distorted when proponents say the OpenRAN is a way for Europe to catch up to the US, China, and Korea in 5G. Note that the US and South Korea achieved 5G leadership without the use of Huawei and ZTE and without the use of OpenRAN.

2022 will see continued OpenRAN advocacy, though it will be more difficult for its proponents to evade the tough questions about the hard reality.

China and Huawei will probably have another difficult year
When Joe Biden became President in January 2020, many wondered how US policy

would change in relation to China and Huawei. Strand Consult maintained that the policy was bipartisan and unlikely to change, and if anything, could be toughened, particularly as reforms adopted in 2018 gave the new administration additional tools to prosecute human rights violations Huawei still faces significant financial pressure, and public opinion about Huawei has not changed. Many countries see it as unsafe and unsustainable to use Huawei equipment in telecommunications networks. Many operators have experienced increased reputational and regulatory risk by using Huawei, and corporate customers do not want their sensitive and valuable data to be vulnerable to the Chinese government. Strand Consult described these challenges in the research note "Is your telecom infrastructure ready for General Secretary Xi to deliver on his Taiwan promise?"

In any event, the good news is that it need not be expensive to rip and replace Chinese equipment. As operators evolve to 5G, they have planned upgrade costs already, and fortunately there are many competitively priced alternatives to Huawei. See Strand Consult's report from 2019 which still holds: The real cost to rip and replace Chinese equipment from telecom networks.

Huawei has pivoted to the cloud market and attempts to bill itself as a trustworthy IT supplier for the public and private sectors and as an alternative to the large IT software companies which supply a combination of services and a cloud. Huawei will probably succeed with its strategy in China and in some countries sympathetic to the Chinese regime. Strand Consult believes it will be a hard sell for Huawei to convince public sector buyers in the US and Europe to buy its solution of putting data into Chinese IT systems and the Chinese cloud.

Cybersecurity is getting even bigger
In 2021, John Strand spoke at many security conferences, including the global gatherings of lawmakers at the Parliamentary Intelligence-Security Forum Panama, Budapest, and Washington. It is telling how these gathering feature leaders from across the political spectrum and from developed

and emerging countries alike. All nations are concerned about addressing serious global problems like illicit finance, human trafficking, and ransomware driven by rogue nations and crime cartels. This means that secure networks and the practices to defend them will become even more important in 2022.
Both the US and EU have rolled out new policy and regulation to improve network security, including 5G. This includes the EU's Toolbox and the US Secure Equipment Act which empowers the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to deny equipment authorizations to firms posing unacceptable national security list. These companies include Huawei, ZTE, Hytera, Hangzhou, Hikvision, and Dahua. It is likely that drone maker DJI will be added, and many national security experts say restrictions should be increased for Lenovo, TikTok, and chip maker YMTC.
Strand Consult's finds that the push for greater security is incompatible with OpenRAN technologies which are increasingly influenced by Chinese players.

Amazon, Google, Facebook, Microsoft – Big Tech mutates faster than Corona
There is good news and the bad news around Big Tech. Just when health authorities think they have the virus under control, a new variant emerges. Similarly, governments are trying to regulate Big Tech. Yet, just when it seems when Big Tech could be pinned down, Big Tech adapts to the new reality—with a new name, a new practice, or a new public-private partnership.
The conversation about Big Tech and its role in society will continue in 2022. Policymakers must realize that Big Tech is adapting faster than the efforts to regulate it. If anything, the regulations adopted to date like the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) have made Big Tech even stronger. Today these companies' revenue, market share, and earnings have increased compared to the time before regulation. And government has made it harder for small and medium sized companies to compete.
The bottom line is that efforts to regulate big tech have failed. Governments should instead make Big Tech pay for their use of resources. Current policy

allows Big Tech a free ride on telecom networks and the public's airwaves. These giveaways only increase their market share and profitability.
These are important lessons as policymakers look at the cloud market.
The Cloud explodes in 2022
Policymakers will turn attention to public clouds which hold an increasing amount of citizen and enterprise data. Big Tech probably has more knowledge and data about people and firms that the government itself. In 2022, cloud services from Amazon, Microsoft and Google will emerge in public consciousness. It is hard to see how a Chinese "alternative" could gain traction in this market, but it still raises questions about existing cloud practices.
Mobile operators put parts of their networks in Amazon, Microsoft, and Google clouds. As mobile networks are increasingly integrated with clouds, this means that individuals and firms are even more embedded with Big Tech. There is no turning off Big Tech and no choosing not to use it.
This adds to the complexity and difficult of data portability from one cloud to another. In practice, companies may find it impossible to migrate from one cloud to another. While this sets off alarms in the antitrust world, it does not diminish the technical reality that cloud services from Amazon, Microsoft and Google are not comparable 1:1. In practice, Amazon, Microsoft and Google will not achieve the same result if you use the three platforms' AI solutions to analyze your data. One big question in 2022 is which has the most intelligent AI solution: Amazon, Microsoft or Google.
One thing is for sure: it is far easier to switch the vendor of 5G infrastructure equipment that to switch cloud providers.
The markets for mobile phones and services are boring
Strand Consult has chronicled the development of the mobile phone market and has published popular reports on the iPhone. It has grown banal to watch Apple launch subsequent "new" versions of the iPhone which look nearly identical to the one before. With few technical improvements in each check whether we were right.

subsequent phone, the main difference is the model number. In 2021, Apple released iPhone 13, and in 2022, there will likely be an iPhone 14, and so on. It is a testament to the company's marketing that it has been able to navigate inevitable device fatigue.

Mobile apps also lumber on with subsequent versions. The key development in 2021 has been the use of mobile apps to manage COVID-19, and that trend will continue in 2022. Additionally governments have entered the mobile app market in a big way with vaccine passports, which for many countries have become or will be de riguer.

Tower companies spread in the value chain. Tower companies are an important part of the efforts to find profitability in an increasingly difficult telecom market. Many mobile carriers have discovered that they can sell off their towers and post unrealized assets. In Europe alone, it has contributed some €36 billion to the mobile industry.

Around the world we see these tower companies starting to spread in the value chain. In Brazil, they invest in fiber, while others consider whether to enter the spectrum market. During 2022, we will see much more of this.

A case for study is Denmark's TDC. Three Danish pension funds PFA, PKA, ATP and Macquarie Infrastructure and Real Assets have chosen to split the telecom operator into an infrastructure company and a service company. The two new entities will be TDC Net for infrastructure and Nuuday for service. Strand Consult has followed the process closely and calls it financial acrobatics. The trend of breakup of telecommunications companies into infrastructure and service entities will be seen increasingly in 2022.

The market for private 5G networks is hot and crowded

In 2021 much was written about private 5G networks, who will build and who will run them. It's a market in which many want to enter: everyone from mobile operators to IT companies to system integrators to infrastructure suppliers. OpenRAN players also want to enter, though it remains to be seen if they can deliver the heavy demands of a classic mobile network. Expect fierce competition, very low margins, and an inevitable shakeout.

Conclusion

In 2021 Strand Consult published many research notes and reports, and introduced our guest blog featuring other leading experts. Strand Consult's mission is to help mobile telecom companies navigate a complex world and to create transparency in policy and regulatory debates. For the last 20 years, Strand Consult has made predictions for the coming year. See our archive to check whether we were right.

Full report published online

Muoka appointed to expand NCC's vision of PR and people-management, says Danbatta

Newly appointed Director of Public Affairs, Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), Reuben Ejike Muoka, is charged with expanding the commission's vision of public relations and people-management, said Executive Vice Chairman/Chief Executive Officer, NCC, Prof. Umar Danbatta, in an official statement annoucing Mouka's new role in the telecoms regulatory agency.

"Muoka is expected to bring his rich and versatile experience in both specialized and traditional journalism, public relations, integrated marketing communications (IMC), corporate communication and people management, to bear on the commission's vision to expand the frontiers of its public goodwill and the impact of its reputational assets," Danbatta stated.

Muoka, an innovative journalist and consummate public relations practitioner, takes over from Dr. Ikechukwu Adinde, who has assumed duties as the Director of Special Duties Department of the Commission.

The new NCC's spokesman was recently promoted a substantive director, alongside Ismail Adedigba, now Director of Research and Development (R&D); and Gwa-Tobi Mohammed, who has also assumed duties as Director/Secretary to the Board of the Commission.

Muoka was in 2021, appointed to head the Special Duties Department, which superintends the International Relations Unit; Emergency Communication Centres Unit; the Public Private Partnership Unit; and the Security Services Unit of the Commission. He was promoted as Director of the Department before his current redeployment to lead the Public Affairs Department, the arm of the Commission mandated to manage the image and visibility of Nigeria's telecom regulator and a leading light of the Nigerian public service.

A former Deputy Communications Editor of the Vanguard Newspapers, former Deputy General Manager at MTS First Wireless (Nigeria's first mobile telephone operator), Muoka joined the NCC in 2007 as a Principal Manager, and was deployed to the Public Affairs Department where he headed the Media and Public Relations Unit. He later rose from the rank of Principal Manager to the position of an Assistant Director in 2010, and by 2015, as a Deputy Director, appointed to head the re-engineered Public Relations Unit of PAD. In 2017, he was redeployed to the Policy, Competition and Economic Analysis Department to head the Economic Analysis unit of department.

Muoka earned M.Sc. degree in Mass Communication from the University of Lagos, specialising in Public Relations and Advertising, where he had earlier successfully completed a Postgraduate Diploma (PGD) in the same field of Mass Communication. Much earlier, he had obtained a bachelor's degree in Performing Arts at the University of Ilorin.

As a mark of his distinctive journalism career, Muoka received a fellowship of the Egyptian Embassy in Nigeria to undertake a Pan-African training and tour of Egypt in 1999, leading to an award of a continental Diploma Certificate in Journalism at the instance of the Egyptian Ministry of Information, and the African Journalists Union (AJU) in Cairo, Egypt.

The focused, innovative and illuminating coverage and analysis of the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in the pre and immediate post liberalisation period of telecom industry

Elevating **digital payments** for a cashless future in **Africa**

By Akshay Grover

COVID-19 has propelled the adoption of digital payment platforms for millions of people across the African continent. The need for contactless methods of making transactions, transformed what was once a nice-to-have into a necessity.

Indeed, whereas the pandemic has bolstered the adoption of digital payments across industries, demographics and payment types on the continent, Africa has always been at the forefront of the payments space led by mobile money services since 2010.

As a company, serving thousands of businesses at varying growth stages across 35 African countries, we've witnessed firsthand the sheer drive and resilience that underpins this revolution in digital payments. It's the entrepreneurship spirit of the continent that inspires us to innovate for businesses, connecting people

and their resources, aligning our strategy to bolster the adoption of digital payments by…

Deepening Our Presence in Existing Markets
Recently, we expanded into 8 new countries – South Africa, Egypt, Senegal, Côte D'Ivoire, Cameroon, DRC, Angola, Ethiopia – in a bid to accelerate the digitization of payments for global, regional and local businesses to build a more connected Africa. By creating seamless payment experiences for businesses and consumers, we're opening up opportunities for millions to do business, access basic services and even connect with their loved ones when it matters the most.

Whereas what we've achieved so far is impressive, with coverage across 220 million banking, mobile money and cards consumers, we intend to go deeper in the countries we're already in. We firmly believe we've only scratched the surface and there is unparalleled opportunity in…

Tapping into the Underserved Offline

Payments Sector
In a report by GSMA released earlier this year, mobile money accounts grew to 1.2 billion with 43% of new users all from Africa. Inferring from this growth rate in just one year, it's clear that the market size for offline payments is significantly larger than online payments. In coming years, we'll be focusing on this space even as we continue to grow in online payments.

In sub Saharan Africa alone, there are 44 million micro, small and medium enterprises providing the majority of jobs effectively serving as the backbone of the economy in their countries. Most of these enterprises and the individuals they serve or employ still use offline or cash payments.

Whereas we're keen on expanding access to these businesses, we can only scale by…

Creating a Win-Win Ecosystem through Partnerships
As a fintech company, we're deeply connected with the banking ecosystem and view them as partners not competitors. Leveraging partnerships with different entities in the industry from banks, to mobile network operators and large enterprises is a fundamental aspect necessary for growth in the fintech space. **Why**?

Because as consumers increasingly use digital methods for their payments – from peer-to-peer transactions to purchasing household goods, paying their bills and accessing fundamental services such as healthcare and education- this presents wonderful opportunities for retailers and businesses to grow their digital capabilities as people move from cash dependency.

Enabling businesses to adapt quickly to these changing demands by providing the right infrastrastructure and relevant value-adds is our driving force.

Olusola Teniola

ADEF will define pathways of digital economy in Africa

President of the Africa Digital Economy Forum (ADEF), Olusola Teniola, in this interview with *IT Edge News*, Oluwaseun Ajayi, speaks on challenges as Africa transits into the digital economy. He says ADEF and other stakeholders including government will uniquely define the continent's pathway into the new economy.

Specifically, how does the African Continental Free Trade Area by the African Union fits into your blueprint to promote digital economy in the continent?

It's important to note that the African Free Trade Continental Agreement in Accra serves as the Secretariat, that's the implementation arm for trade agreements amongst African countries. Recently, only a couple of days ago, the Pan-African Payments and Settlement System (PAPSS) was launched in Ghana and it is headquartered in Accra, so there is a recognition that Accra seems to be the place that pulls together issues around the Continental Free Trade Agreement and it's just coincidental that the Africa Digital Economy Forum (ADEF) is also hosted and located in Accra even though I'm based in Lagos. You can see that we already have huge and continent-wide approach to our advocacy. We see the epic centre or anything that has to do with digital economy surrounding the African Continental Free Trade Agreement as a motivation for ADEF. Because each of the 54 African countries has just started a digital economy journey, we have an opportunity as ADEF to actually start to put together not only those multinationals that cut across different countries in Africa but those little social organizations and also government entities

that are willing to ensure that this is a goal that drives the way we in Africa define digital economy. Remember, we do not want to make the same mistakes as was the case in the past where a lot of technology provided by manufacturers resides outside Africa. The technology providers t pulled all the local talents, wealth, removing jobs out of Africa into their own economy. We wouldn't want another case of missed opportunity. ADEF is working with stakeholders to ensure that we are building a future for the youth and at the same time addressing those issues that are hurting our members. We allow our members to define what their pressing issues are and where they think

Moving on, speaking about the digital economy in Africa - do you think Africa is ready in terms of infrastructure and shouldn't Africa be talking about broadband?

Africa is already talking about broadband. Broadband discussions happened 15 years ago and in the last five to seven years the discussions around broadband have continued to improve Africa's broadband growth trajectory. Most African countries, quite a number of them, have broadband plans now, that's a recognition by the government that broadband is the

foundation to connectivity which is the key here. Yes! Broadband means high speed connectivity that gives the consumers the best user experience and it allows them to engage in limitless digital explorations that improves life in several meaningful manners. But the idea now is really that discussions around digital companies have to start. We need to digitalize processes and also more importantly, we need to make sure that across the demographics, everyone including government is actually working together to create a true digital community that benefits Africa - that discussion is very important otherwise we have to treat commitments that benefits non-Africa; those that supply the technology into the continent and then take the benefit out. I think that it's not too early to start that discussion now even though it's going to be a slow start.

What does ADEF envisage to achieve for the continent in the next five years in terms of its digital economy goals and objectives?

That's a good one, a really good question. We are still at a very early stage and to be true to ourselves, there are different organisations out there to engage with. I think that's something we are starting. We recognize many foundations in West Africa and South Africa and in Morocco as well that will lead honest capability and capacities. I think that with any forum like this there would be baby steps. Our objectives really are to continually engage and really collaborate and I think that we cannot do this on our own; this is not a single organization. We recognise that we need to pull together to go further, so really I think in terms of our objectives and our goals, the first one in terms of priority is engagement. The second one is to look at how we can gain traction from our members who are national stakeholders, ADEF believe there's a need for a cross country dialogue. Thirdly, I would say in three to four years, we should have a Forum able to include governments, civil societies and other stakeholders who are defining digital economy for Africa in meaningful, practical ways. Our efforts at ADEF are focused on engagements and awareness.

Telecoms regulator says industry collaboration will successfully drive 5G deployment

The Executive Vice Chairman/CEO of the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), Prof. Umar Garba Danbatta, has stresed that industry collaboration is strategic to successful deployment of 5G Services in Nigeria.

The telecoms regulator, while speaking at the 90th Edition of the Telecom Consumer Parliament (TCP) hosted by the Consumer Affairs Bureau of the NCC in Lagos, urged industry stakeholders to stand with the commission to explore the prospects and enormous potentials of the new technology.

According to Danbatta, the policy framework for the deployment has come into place and will facilitate deployment of services by the recent winners of the 3.5GHz spectrum auction, MTN Nigeria Communications Ltd and MAFAB Communications Ltd – the NCC noted in an official statement by NCC's Director, Public Affairs, Reuben Muoka.

According to Danbatta, the NCC has set out the regulatory instruments needed for fast deployment of the new versatile technology for the benefit of the consumers and the stakeholders.

"We will continue to collaborate with stakeholders across sectors to ensure faster deployment of 5G services, and accelerate the growth of Nigeria's broadband infrastructure," said Danbatta as he asked for stakeholders' support to ensure that 5G technology is deployed in Nigeria in a manner beneficial to all telecom consumers and

to support the emergent Digital Economy Policy of the Federal Government of Nigeria.

He highlighted the potential use cases for 5G networks as broadly categorised by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) to include Enhanced Mobile broadband (eMBB), Massive Machine-type Communications (mMTC), as well as Ultra-reliable and Low-latency Communications (uLLC)

He identified some challenges in the deployment to include limited frequencies with the required spectral efficiency, skilled professionals with requisite knowledge of the technology, fewer number of 5G-enabled devices, and cost of deployment but stated that the industry must work to turn the challenges into opportunities rather than seeing them as obstacles.

Prof. Danbatta said the issues that should militate against or slow down the deployment of 5G technology are themselves opportunities that can potentially create new revenue streams or new subsectors in the industry.

In the panel discussion on the presentation titled "5G Networks: Opportunities and Challenges" by Director, Technical Standards and Network Integrity, Bako Wakil, the Executive Commissioner, Stakeholder Management of NCC, Adeleke Adewolu, who chaired the panel session, urged all participants to exploit the opportunities offered by the 90th TCP to contribute to the deployment of 5G Network in Nigeria.

"We must conclude this Telecom Consumer Parliament with solutions to challenges that are associated with 5G deployment in countries that had deployed the services ahead of Nigeria. We must also have a clear roadmap on how the opportunities offered by the technology can be maximized for the benefit of Nigerians" Adewolu said.

The event was attended by representatives of Mobile Networks Operators (MNOs), the Association of Licensed Telecoms Operators of Nigeria (ALTON), Association of Telecom Companies of Nigeria (ATCON), Consumer Advocacy and Empowerment Foundation (CADEF), Association of Telecoms Cable TV and Internet Subscribers (ATCIS), and other key stakeholders in the telecom industry.

Technologist, serial entrepreneur and investor, Eric Osiakwan is one of Africa's sturdiest voices on investment and tech-entrepreneurship. The Managing Partner of Chanzo Capital believes Africa will record more investments and more unicorns in 2022. Osiakwan has worked in 32 African countries setting up ISPs, ISPAs, IXPs and high-tech startups. He Co-Founded Angel Africa List, Angel Fair Africa and currently serves on the board of Farmerline, Hubtel, Forhey, Teranga Solutions, Hotel Online, Wala, Amp.it, SameLogic, Wanjo Foods, Airshop, Rapid Expense, NestSquare , Data Integrated, Ghana Cyber City and WABco – some of which are his investments. He was part of the team that built the TEAMS submarine cable in East Africa and an ICT Consultant for the WorldBank, Soros Foundations, UNDP, USAID, USDoJ, USDoS as well as African governments and private firms. He authored "The KINGS of Africa's Digital Economy", co-authored the "Open Access Model", adopted globally by the telecommunications industry, "Negotiating the Net" – the politics of Internet Diffusion in Africa and "The Internet in Ghana" with the Mosaic Group. Eric is a TED, Stanford, MIT and Harvard fellow. He interacted with *IT Edge News,* Joy Amaka Onweani.

"[Startup investments] would double."

1.   The African startup ecosystem showed a lot of promises last year in terms of investments and growth? Are we seeing more Unicorns this year?
Absolutely and also more investments – my suspicion is that we would double last years'.

2.   You are an investor in several startups across Africa. What are the challenges of investing in startups in Nigeria and the rest of Africa?
The biggest challenge is finding the team to execute on the many amazing ideas floating around – company building is a team spot and so without qualified staff it is hard to achieve success. Our educational institutions need to triple their efforts.

3.   How has covid-19 impacted on the Investment climate generally in Africa: and specifically as regards startups within the KINGS?
COVID has had a positive unintended consequence in the KINGS and Africa in general which I detailed in latest blog post @ blogs.Harvard.edu/Eric. Whilst Covid19 has brought unimaginable devastation to the world and stoked racial revolt in America, which is now spilling over to Europe, in Africa, our fast adaptation to the new normal spared us not only mass casualties and pain, but the lockdowns triggered an unintended consequence of speeding up the digital economy. This resulted in investments in the second quarter like our portfolio company Zulzi closing $2.5M and AMP Global Technologies closing a $2M prior to COVID19 setting the stage for our Africa original content format and series launching this quarter @ www.takebackthemic.com. Then on 24th June 2020, Ingressive Capital closed their maiden $10M seed fund to invest in tech companies across Africa. On the same day, the Africa Venture Capital and Private Equity Association (AVCA) published their VC in Africa report for 2014 to 2019 showing a total of 613 deals totaling $3.9B with 2019 recording $1.4B of those transactions. Majority of those deals happened in South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana and Egypt. South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria and Ghana are four of the KINGS countries (excluding Ivory Coast) that I had postulated back in 2013 would be leading the digital economy in Africa. Ivory Coast was replaced on the list by Egypt partly because of the civil war of 2011 that ousted incumbent president Gbagbo and set back the country's development tremendously.

4.   Last December, you were at the investors' dinner in Lagos. What was the event designed to achieve?
We at Chanzo Capital believe strongly that bringing people together can lead to many amazing outcomes and more so bringing the fraternity together to break bread creates intimacy that breeds exchanges and a healthy community.

5.   What is your projection for 2022 as an investor?
It is the year that Web3 would come out of the closet into the mainstream in Africa and on the global stage

6.   What will you advise Nigerian and other African governments on how they can better improve the startup ecosystem?
By getting out of the way, for example allow blockchain and crypto whiles observing it's growth paradigm and then create the appropriate regulatory environment together with the industry.

African
business leaders predict startup boom amidst worries thorny regulations could slow **expansion**

African business leaders are predicting a boom in startup businesses across the continent as the number of working age people launching new firms expands, new research* for blockchain-based mobile network operator World Mobile shows.

But they also expect worries that cumbersome regulations and internet connectivity could slow down growth.

Startups across the continent are currently valued at around $7.6 billion – around 0.2% of the total $3.8 trillion value of start-ups globally** – but nearly seven out of 10 (69%) of senior African business executives believe that will more than double in the next five years.

The rise in the predicted value of startups will be driven by growth in the numbers of people starting companies, the study with African business leaders from companies with combined annual revenues of more than $6.75 billion found.

Before the pandemic around 22% of

working age adults on the African continent started new businesses. But the research among senior executives based in Angola, Botswana, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa, and Tanzania found they expect that number to grow.

More than two out of five (43%) business leaders believe around a quarter of working age adults will have started their own businesses within five years. Almost all (97%) questioned expect the rate to increase from the pre-pandemic 22%.

Business leaders worry new business creation could be blocked by cumbersome regulations and a lack of digital skills due to poor internet connectivity seen as the biggest issues ahead of limited funding and fragmented markets.

They are hopeful about improvements – 70% expect the regulatory issue to become less of a problem over five years while 60% believe the digital skills gap on the continent will close.

World Mobile is aiming to revolutionise internet connectivity in sub-Saharan Africa which is essential to improving digital skills. It is already working with the government in Zanzibar where it is launching a unique hybrid mobile network delivering connectivity supported by low altitude platform balloons.

Its blockchain-based network vastly reduces capital expenditure and cuts prices compared to traditional telecom operators and World Mobile is in discussions to expand in Tanzania and Kenya, as well as other territories underserviced by traditional mobile operators.

"The numbers of Africans starting their own businesses pre-pandemic was already very impressive and it is interesting to see that senior business leaders across the continent expect even more expansion," said CEO of World Mobile Micky Watkins.

Adding: "More than doubling the value of start-ups on the continent over the next five years will have a major impact on employment and standards of living and governments are working hard to make this happen by removing regulation and addressing the digital skills gap.

"We are focused on providing affordable and reliable internet connectivity and in addition we are going to work with governments to support projects such as providing free, unlimited internet access to schools across Zanzibar."

World Mobile's balloons will be the first to officially launch in Africa for commercial use, offering a more cost-effective way to provide digital connection to people and is the first step in its mission to help bring nearly four billion people online before 2030 in line with the UN and World Bank's SDGs.

The World Mobile approach is more sustainable, in environmental, social and governance terms. Environmental impacts are mitigated using solar-powered nodes, second-life batteries, and energy-efficient technology. World Mobile creates a positive societal impact through the application of its circular economy model – a "sharing economy" where locals share in the ownership and rewards of the network.

Ready! Set! Go! Galaxy Backbone Tier IV data centre in Kano deepens national digital infrastructure experience

The Galaxy Backbone (GBB) Tier 4 Data Centre in Kano, Kano state is set for launch in what will alter the business of data centre services in Nigeria for good.

Designed to improve the total customer experience of GBB's growing list of clients from the public and private sectors, the new digital infrastructure in Kano will serve as a backup to the Tier III data centre in Abuja,

All Tier 4 data centres add fault tolerance mechanisms to the tier 3 list of requirements. They have multiple physically isolated systems that act as redundant components and distribution paths. Besides all the Tier 3 conditions, a Tier 4 facility must ensure:

- All components have the support of two generators, two UPS systems, and two cooling systems.
- Each distribution path is independent so that a single failure in one does not cause a domino effect with other components.

- Operations continue to run for a minimum of 96 hours following a local or regional power outage.

- The power source does not connect to any external source.

- The separation between redundant components is vital for a tier 4 data center. Physical separation prevents a local event from compromising both systems.

- Tier 4 data centers either have 2N or 2N+1 redundancy: 2N redundancy (or N+N) means the facility has a wholly mirrored, independent system on stand-by. If anything happens to a primary component, an identical backup replica starts operating to ensure continued operations.

- The 2N+1 model provides twice the operational capacity (2N) and an additional backup component (+1) in case a failure happens while a secondary system is active.

The GBB's Tier 4 facility can ensure clients do not experience more than 26.3 minutes of downtime annually. In addition, customers are guaranteed a Tier 4 service level agreement (SLAs) that is near 100% uptime even in the face of required maintenance of redundant counterparts.

According to Managing Director/CEO, Muhammed Bello Abubakar, Galaxy will continuously invest in enhancing digital infrastructure and human capacity to meet the rising and sophisticated demands across agencies including security and other arms of governments.

The vendor neutral facility is benchmarked on performance-based standards in terms availability, redundancy, and fault tolerance.

The GBB officially opened shop in 2007 initially focusing on improving connectivity infrastructure challenges in federal ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs). With more than 800 MDAs in existence, the GBB has routinely faced the challenge of helping MDAs improve their too achieve their statutory mandate.

The new Kano facility is part of the overall plan to provide functional data centres in all the six geopolitical zones of the country.

Amazon is coming to Nigeria with its $4.9 trillion strength – Konga and Jumia beware

Amazon is coming to Nigeria with its $4.9 trillion strength and it could mean a complete overhaul of e-commerce in Africa's largest economy to push Konga and Jumia to the edge.
Amazon's Nigerian entry, scheduled for second quarter of 2023, is part of its expansion drive into five new countries in Europe, Africa and Latin America.
Nigeria and South Africa take the spot for its African drive with the e-commerce giant hoping to rework the market-space with lower prices and deeper grassroots presence for millions of customers.
Documents sighted by IT Edge News revealed that the company plans a formal launch in April 2023 and is already recruiting key

staff to push its market entry.
Amazon has since 2016 started exploring Nigeria's market with its Prime Video subscription services and its Amazon Web Services (AWS).
With its Prime Video streaming services, Amazon has gradually reworked that burgeoning sub-sector with massive investment in production and licensing deals with local film and television studios.
AWS is already the go-to services for thousands of enterprises including big corporate players and small medium businesses (SMBs). These enterprises are leveraging lower cost, more robust and friendlier cloud and server hosting from the tech giant.

Adeduntan: FirstBank's investment in technology and strong balance sheet will drive more impressive results

The Managing Director/Chief Executive Officer of First Bank Nigeria Limited, Dr. Adesola Adeduntan, last year saw his tenure extended as part of efforts to ensure the stability of the financial institution. In this interview with THISDAY, he speaks about the intervention of the Central Bank of Nigeria, the future of the bank, trends that shaped the economy in 2021, his expectations for 2022 and other pertinent banking sector issues. Excerpts…

Your third quarter results saw a decline in some of the key indicators such as gross earnings, profit before tax and profit after tax, what was responsible for this?

The commercial banking reported a resilient performance resulting in a Profit before Tax of N44.3billion for the nine months period ended September 30, 2021. This result was delivered in a sustained low yield environment, which continues to compress margins as the macro-economic environment remained challenging amidst the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

FirstBank's focus on putting the customers first continues to be a driving force as we keep supporting our customers in meeting their business needs.

he evidence of this support is reflected in the 24.1% y-t-d growth in the loan book, underpinned by solid risk management practices and from which sustainable good quality earnings are being delivered as asset quality remains firmly under control. Furthermore, in our concerted efforts at sustaining our dominance in financial inclusion and digital banking, we continue to record growths in our agent banking business, supporting the 17.5 per cent growth in non-interest income.

We remain determined to continue strengthening our capabilities across our footprints, as we are confident that our investment in technology and the strong balance sheet, which the Group has built over the last six years, will provide the solid platform for more impressive results into the future.

The CBN recently introduced the eNaira, what has been the acceptance rate by FirstBank's customers, and do you think this will positively impact your bank?

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) as the regulator of the banking industry continues to lead and drive development in the industry. In the banking industry, digital currency is the future and the CBN is staying ahead of the curve in Africa with the introduction of the eNaira given the several benefits associated with the digital currency, such as safety, speed, and convenience. A review of the events over the course of the past few years has shown that digitalisation in its different forms has been net positive for the financial services industry.

The eNaira is no different; the digitalisation of the naira expands upon Nigeria's already advanced payment ecosystem; the roadmap for the eNaira over the next couple of months will reveal some exciting use cases that will further grow the ecosystem and encourage even more interaction with this new form of currency. Currently we have a whole segment of digitally curious customers who have started interacting with the eNaira, and as the eNaira ecosystem grows and acceptance increases as a store and exchange of value, so will those numbers.

FirstBank's channels currently account for about 17 per cent of the total reported eNaira transaction volume. The bank is dependably dynamic and continues to be at the vanguard of innovation in the banking industry. Overall, I am confident that the eNaira will positively impact the bank as our customers continue to transact through the bank's channels, supporting the digital economy drive. The number of customers will increase as the eNaira will enable the sign-on of excluded people in the financial system, thereby supporting the financial inclusion drive of the CBN. The eNaira will reduce the cost of processing cash for the bank, thereby making it a cheaper, reliable and faster way of exchange and the bank will have access to customers across the continents, simplifying and facilitating cross border payments and trade.

How would you assess your bank's performance through the pandemic?

The Covid-19 pandemic disrupted several sectors of the economy, the banking industry was one of the most impacted given the critical role that banks play in the economy and across all sectors. However, FirstBank navigated the pandemic crisis successfully and recorded the best financial performance since 2015 in the 2020 financial year. FirstBank delivered a strong performance both on the financial and non-financial front underpinned by resiliency, digital innovation and customer centricity. On financial performance, despite the pandemic, the bank recorded significant growth in its revenue base, profitability and asset.

Through the bank's extensive physical footprint and expanding agent banking network and digital banking capabilities, the Group continues to reach an increasing number of customers, which drives customer deposits in low-cost current and savings accounts that serve as an important funding base. On non-financial performance, the bank's non-financial performance across disruptive innovation and customer focus lens has been impressive. Some of the milestones achieved during the pandemic was us launching the pioneer FastTrack ATM in Africa offering customers a touchless solution for ATM transactions and enabling customers to pre-order cash on ATMs via the bank's USSD or mobile banking platforms.

We unveiled FirstBank's Virtual Payment Card, a digital representation of the naira-denominated plastic debit card, launched the Firstmonie Agent Credit, a digital lending solution designed to provide bridge finance to help our Agents solve liquidity challenges, leveraged technology to promote digital account opening process through the Digital Sales Executive App, ATMs, Firstmonie Agents, *894# USSD banking, FirstMobile and Company website. Also, we upgraded the Bank's mobile banking application, FirstMobile, with new and improved features to promote a convenient and secured mobile banking experience for customers, rolled out FirstBank Digital Innovation Lab's proprietary developed Mobile Banking App for our wholly owned subsidiary FBNBank Senegal, Increased customer account base (including wallets) to over 30 million.

Maintained the dominant digital bank rating in Nigeria with over 20 per cent market share of electronic banking transaction volumes, about 16 million users on our digital banking platforms (USSD *894#, FirstMobile and FirstOnline) and over 11 million card users. Expanded the Agent Banking network to over 86,500[1] agents across 772 out of 774 local governments in Nigeria and paid out over N18 billion as commissions to Firstmonie Agents.Reinforced the Bank's financial inclusion drive with the disbursement of over N22 billion and N35 billion in loans through FirstAdvance and Agent Credit digital platforms, respectively. Provided free e-learning solutions in partnership with Roducate, IBM and the Lagos State Government, thereby helping to reduce the negative impact of school closure following the COVID-19 pandemic on students in Lagos State.

With the emergence of PSBs and telcos granted licences, how much would that deepen financial inclusion and do you see this competing with banks' agency banking?

The introduction of Payment Service Banks (PSBs) is another step taken by the CBN in line with its goal of promoting financial inclusion and enhancing access to financial services for the unbanked, underbanked, and underserved segments of the population across all parts of the country. The entrance of the PSBs will certainly deepen financial inclusion. It will impact the financial services landscape to the extent that the Telcos will be able to leverage their extensive infrastructure to offer last mile delivery of financial solutions to those currently unbanked. Today, we have 70 million Nigerians that have been issued the National Identity Number.

About 20 per cent of this number is currently unbanked, and they can more easily be reached. The expected impact will ride on the back of synergy and collaborations across the industry. And this is what we are already seeing. For us at FirstBank, the development is not a threat; we see it more as an opportunity. You will agree that for an institution like ours that has been around and flourishing for over 127 years, our ability to read and effectively respond to market trends has been well proven. What we have done with our agent banking is to build a platform that could be leveraged to enrich customer offerings in diverse ways. We do not just possess spread, we possess depth. So, leveraging technology and open API, we are poised to work with the PSBs to deliver value to the banking public and citizenry.

Court order for Immigration, NIMC to release citizen's personal data equals hacking – AHA

Abdul-Hakeem Ajijola (AhA), a global cybersecurity resource, ranked No.13 in the IFSEC 2018 Global Cybersecurity professionals and thought leaders, has faulted the recent order by an Abuja court asking the Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS), the National Identity Management Commission (NIMC) and some banks in the country to release the biodata of David Ukpo to a former Deputy President of the Nigerian Senate at the centre of criminal proceedings in UK for alleged organ-harvesting scheme against a young Nigerian (David Ukpo).

The data security expert described it as "a precedent that undermines all known data privacy frameworks and related global norms."

He believes "those drafting Nigeria's data protection and privacy legislation, [can now] be pre-emptive and factor such possibilities with a view to providing pathways that prevent one private citizen gaining access to another citizens personal data, in line with Nigeria's treaty obligations."

Ajijola, who is also the Chairman, Consultancy Support Services (CS2) Ltd noted: "Releasing a citizens (data subjects) bio data directly to another citizen because of a private contractual breach, not a national security or government-government matter, sets a terrible precedent and undermines all known data privacy frameworks, laws, and related global norms."

According to Ajijola, "the court, though its decision, has effectively "hacked" and "breached" NIMC and bypassed all its protocols, trained experts, and costly technological investments to extract sensitive biodata – hacking is not restricted to cyber actors."

Read the full Ajijola's full statement below.

A precedent that undermines all known data privacy frameworks and related global norms

Release Ukpo's biodata to Ekweremadu, Court orders Immigration, others

https://huhuonline.com/index.php/home-4/huhuonline-more-news/15610-release-ukpo-s-biodata-to-ekweremadu-court-orders-immigration-others

Releasing a citizens (data subjects) bio data directly to another citizen because of a private contractual breach, not a national security or government-government matter, sets a terrible precedent and undermines all known data privacy frameworks, laws, and related global norms – the negative effect on our societies drive to evolve a digital economy is likely to be profound and long lasting. It will also be used as justification by other nations to avoid hosting their data in Nigeria or on Nigerian platforms, as the value of such data increases.

This is compounded by the fact that the courts and the litigants already know the content of the young man's passport and his age based on this official document. On that note, Immigration ought not to publicly comment or release information on someone's passport details without permission. What happens if the NIMC, BVN and passport ages are different? No Nigeria document will then ever be taken seriously. What if the ages tally across the three platforms? Then obtaining them will not further the case, as the passport data is sufficient, but undermines the sanctity of accessing and extracting data from the NIMC database by well-connected persons.

Furthermore, the court, though its decision, has effectively "hacked" and "breached" NIMC and bypassed all its protocols, trained experts, and costly technological investments to extract sensitive biodata – hacking is not restricted to cyber actors. As a precedent, in future, a person of "means" who has a contractual misunderstanding with a company can conceivably seek the biometric data of all the firms' employees to make their "case." This is something that NIMC must test in court, else its credibility to safeguard citizens biometric data is jeopardised.

At the very least the court would pass such information through official channels to the UK court and not provide it to one of the belligerents, given that they are both Nigerian citizens and theoretically equal under the law.

The court has reinforced the scepticism of many, especially in our diaspora, that their biometric and related personally identifiable information (PII) is not safe in Nigeria.

Trust is earned not purchased and this case has repercussions beyond the belligerents and undermines the trust needed to build a sustainable digital society.

To those drafting Nigeria's data protection and privacy legislation, please be pre-emptive and factor such possibilities with a view to providing pathways that prevent one private citizen gaining access to another citizens personal data, in line with Nigeria's treaty obligations.

DWTC Africa Startup Roadshow –
Fostering partnerships for growth and opportunities

Matters eRising with Olusegun Oruame

The African startup economy is booming and it is not going to burst anytime soon.

Led by Nigeria, the continent's largest economy, the Africa's startup ecosystem is at the dawn of its growth and is clearly drawing global interests to underscore its rising value and the increasing need for collaborations. Not surprisingly, there is a growing interest by the global community to explore the diverse opportunities still green and largely untapped.

DWTC came calling in May

The Dubai World Trade Centre (DWTC) came calling in May with a pan-African startup roadshow and competition designed to create awareness for startups across the region, notably Nigeria for international opportunities.

The DWTC is the organiser of GITEX and Global Future Stars — a startup gathering now rebranded as North Star, an annual event touted as the largest global gathering of startups, mentors and investors.

The African startup roadshow is part of a new deal with which the DWTC hopes to build robust collaborations with local authorities such as the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) in Nigeria to further explore ways of enhancing the value proposition of Africa's startup economy. In Nigeria, the roadshow

and pitching held in Abuja and Lagos with strong support of the NITDA opening and strengthening new ways across borders to boost Nigeria's startup economy.

The North Star Pitch Competition had four winners: Paddy Cover and Pricepally (Lagos) FLOEWS and Medtech Africa (Abuja) in Nigeria to be fully sponsored by the DWTC to attend the GITEX Technology Week with the North Star event from October 10-14, 2022. The four Nigerian startups will join their counterparts from the rest of Africa to leverage exposure, funding and partnerships from across the world.

The world cannot ignore Africa's startup economy

Africa has become the startup continent you cannot ignore. Here are some exciting facts to begin with. According to Briter Bridges, African startups raised about $4.9 billion in total estimated funding in 2021. Of this figure, about $4.65 billion was disclosed and $300 million undisclosed. Briter Bridges offers market insights to businesses and investors across Africa, Latin America, and Asia Pacific,

It is an interesting climb for an ecosystem clearly in transition as the 2022 figure showed more than a 250% increase from 2021 total funding of $1.3 billion raised

from over 740 deals or above 25% for 2020.

The upward swing revealed a sector that is supercharged in spite of its challenge considering that in 2019; the ecosystem had $1.3 billion pumped into it and grew to $1.7 billion in 2020.

African startups have continued to record more than three times the pulsating growth for 2020 and the results have been outstanding. The continent has seven unicorns to boot. Five of the unicorns have a strong Nigeria stamp including Flutterwave, Interswitch, Esusu, Jumia and Andela. Don't forget OPay. All have crossed the $1 billion market valuation.

As the new definers of Africa's fast changing business landscape, the unicorns are pointers to where Africa's 21st century economy is heading led by fledgling enterprises starting to scale and expanding beyond the traditional jurisdictions of older companies.

What is even more motivating is the growing interest in the continent's startup ecosystem by an increasing number of offshore entities forcing local policy makers to take notice and tag along with policies and initiatives that, oft times do not completely reflect the dynamics of the startup sector.

From 2013 when NITDA started using the GITEX platform to promote local startups to international audience, the interest has grown steadily within government circle with more platforms being adopted to explore global exposure for the startup community. But there is still plenty of room for improvements.

Unicorns in Lagos reworking Nigeria's economy and politics

Lagging policies or not, the ecosystem is already a moving train with no less than 3,300 startups in Nigeria's startup train as at 2020. The figure is now more than thrice that of 2020 and far ahead of any other African country including South Africa and Kenya.

In fact, the Nigerian startup economy accounted for some $1.65 billion raised as seed and series funding in 2021 – nearly half of the funding that was pumped into the entire African ecosystem that year.

Lagos Is Africa's Startup Capital
Leading cities for startups in Africa in 2021 (by total score)*

Lagos	4.69
Nairobi	4.28
Cape Town	4.05
Johannesburg	3.86
Cairo	2.73
Kigali	1.21
Accra	1.11
Tunis	0.72

* Based on quantity (e.g. number of startups/accelerators), quality (e.g. number of unicorns, exits, pantheons) and business (national economic indicators) scores
Source: StartupBlink

statista

Nigeria's leading position as a thriving startup ecosystem naturally makes Lagos, its commercial nerve, Africa's startup capital. According to one report by Statista, quoting data from StartupBlink, Lagos leads the ranking of African cities when it comes to attractiveness for startups. In 2021, Lagos outperformed its direct competitors Nairobi, Cape Town and Johannesburg, "a trend that is likely to continue…. Lagos is not only the biggest metropolitan area in Africa but has also made a name for itself as a tech hub rapidly advancing towards a 24-hour economy, generating ten percent of Nigeria's total GDP of $432.3 billion."

Nigeria's startup ecosystem can only get stronger with an unrelenting brand appeal to global investors, and increasing collaborations among stakeholders whether within or outside the country.

The DWTC Africa startup roadshow is a significant revelation that Africa's startup economy cannot be ignored, and certainly not Nigeria's. There's a vast window to leverage opportunities among millions of young Nigerians aspiring to be the next Elon Musk. You will see them all over the country particularly Lagos where clusters of efforts are already becoming unicorns to rework Nigeria's economy and politics.

NITDA adds TIES to drive innovation,
entrepreneurship in hubs and startups

The National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) is introducing the Technology Innovation and Entrepreneurship Support Scheme (TIES) to provide opportunity and build capacity of both hub managers and technology startups.

Designed round the objectives of the National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy (NDEPS), TIES targets massive creation of entrepreneurs and jobs within the ecosystem.

"As an Agency, we noticed that most of the young talented people who have ideas lack mentorship. Iinnovative solutions are needed to tackle the problems in the country which NITDA is helping by creating the avenue that would provide a balance between the innovators and the markets," said Director-General, NITDA, Kashifu Inuwa Abdullahi, during a webinar session with stakeholders and members of the TIES Scheme.

He noted that the idea was conceptualised during the COVID-19 pandemic to assist industry partners who have established IT hubs to upskill their hubs and help with their businesses. TIES is in furtherance to transforming the country into a knowledge-based and IT-driven economy, the NITDA boss added.

According to him, many economies are struggling to survive because of the pandemic. It has become apparent that to embrace the new normal and survive, countries must encourage the development of emerging technologies to move forward.

According to Abdullahi, the initiative will be used as a platform to invest in creative people who can create jobs for themselves and others. It would enable partners to turn their ideas into reality in form of products and services.

"NITDA, as a Federal Government Agency, was established to, among others, develop and regulate Information Technology in Nigeria and is assiduously working to develop the innovation process through the creation of enabling platforms and opportunities propelling creative ideas from inception to actualization, resulting into impact in the society."

He further said that to accelerate the prosperity of the country, NITDA is working on delivering the target of

achieving 95% digital literacy by the year 2030 which is possible if the agency and its partners work together.

The NITDA boss explained that the target could be achieved by engaging two perspectives, these are; getting people to understand and use technology and digital services, and building capacity in other to establish digital services locally.

"There is a target to train 1 million developers in the next 18 months, and we will be looking forward to getting better ideas from you on how to deliver this initiative because as a government agency we believe the only way to achieve success is to work together and establish stronger partnerships between ourselves," he added.

OPINION: Empowerment – Still on Kashifu's vindication of youth excellence - *By Hashim Suleiman*

Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu's trajectory has taught every discerning person to note the importance of empowerment and philanthropy in today's world so has Kashifu Inuwa's trajectory which saw him emerged the Director General of National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) about three years ago but has become the most popular head of parastatals in Nigeria to the extent that his rumored governorship ambition held Jigawa state political decision down for over two months and we heard it was all about how he looked the most part to be the governor of that state, if this is not a perfect show of excellence, then what could ever be more?

Recall that I had highlighted during his first year anniversary that he has vindicated the supposed youth excellence in governance that advocates like us have always touted. However, we always insisted that you could only be assured of such when the recruitment is right.

Read here: https://www.premiumtimesng.com/promoted/409867-0ne-year-at-nitda-kashifu-as-a-vindication-of-youth-excellence-in-governance-by-hashim-suleiman.html. He has steadily maintained consistency regarding his person and when one does such, his initial intent would only continue to steadily progress until it's consolidated to become a sort of an ideology and which aims to mentor youths for national development.

While all of the activities that informed my opinion on his first year in office was predicated on an exceptional show of management skills, he had since showcased another cardinal ideal of a progressive and that is 'empowerment'. He had demonstrated willingness to share the little he has with people around him, especially people of his constituency and which he grew with and have since become more of a family to him, you know they say 'charity begins at home'.

We would first know a person if we can receive appropriate commendation from their kinsmen. Kashifu has entrenched

that within a short period of time and he deserves a standing ovation. Because what we write is borne out of critical research and objectivity, the reader could choose to enquire from any Jigawa State citizen about who Kashifu is, you'll vindicate me with that.

You know nothing hides under the Sun and it's only a matter of time before critical people would notice to appreciate what you do, little wonder why the Qatar Foundation chose to collaborate with the Inuwa Foundation in providing a massive empowerment to the people of Jigawa state. It showed alignment in principle, recall that Qatar as a nation maintains high level of integrity and you'll find that in every of their endeavors.

The choice of people they'll partner with on any endeavor would equally have to tick all their boxes. Ladies and Gentlemen, I introduce to you 'The Inuwa Foundation'. It has started from Jigawa State and advancing to see how to reach out to the rest of the nation through plans like improving digital literacy and entrepreneurship.

All sorts of empowerment was dished out through the above collaboration, ranging from distribution sewing machines to grinding machines, pumping machines for irrigation and so much provision of infrastructure like schools, mosques etc.

the distribution was devoid of sentiments and it ensured that the items and infrastructure got to the people and places that needed and deserved them the most. Such kinds of efforts have to be commended appropriately for educating upcoming ones as well as giving some of the subsisting leaders to learn how best to utilize positions of Authority and influence.

What Kashifu has used this philanthropy to do is to instill hope and mentor young people to see reasons to be good people and have empathy towards one another. Empathy has proven to be one of the

> ## "What Kashifu has used this philanthropy to do is to instill hope and mentor young people to see reasons to be good people and have empathy towards one another."

most important attribute a leader could have. Millions of jobs will be created through efforts like his because the form of the empowerment will create a chain that spreads to create lines of benefits directly and indirectly.

All young people with opportunities are again encouraged to imbibe such spirit in order that we convince everyone that the advocacy about youth takeover could indeed be the needed change for our people and country's prosperity.

Hashim Suleiman:
oneheartnaija@yahoo.com

OPINION: Why is technology such a big thing for government agencies to manage? By Chido Nwakanma

The ongoing INEC voters registration exercise has brought to the fore again the paradox of technology application by Nigerian MDAs. Across the land, prospective voters find that the simple act of registration is akin to climbing a mountain or reprising the walk to Golgotha doing the Stations of the Cross at the Awhum monastery and praying ground. It is tasking.

Technology for Nigerian MDAs is a slow coach that elongates rather than shortens the journey. It only adds layers to the bureaucratic red tape rather than eliminates it. It is a curious contradiction procured at such a high cost.

It is immaterial whether it is the Independent National Electoral Commission, Federal Road Safety Commission, or the Passport Office run by the Immigration Department of the Ministry of Interior. Their application of technology defeats speed and quick response as some of the attributes of technology deployment.

Compare and contrast the trajectory of procuring any vital documents entrusted to these agencies and the one managed by the Bankers Committee. You will walk into a bank, request an ATM card, and fill out the forms with your data. They capture it with your biometrics, and you get an ATM card useable in Nigeria and overseas.

INEC claims it will take a minimum of three months to process and print a Voters Card after you have done pre-registration on its portal or physical capture at the centres. You have provided all the information. Why does it have to take that long?

Ditto for the Road Safety Commission with Drivers' Licenses. Ditto the Passport Office. Pray, what are technology's definitions and applications for these agencies? From where do they procure the tech platforms that make them such slow coaches? Who prescribes or engineers the platforms that deliver such snail speeds in the name of technology and at such humungous cost?

INEC asks you to register online. Some succeed, others do not. However, it is the start of a lengthy bureaucratic journey. Others go to an INEC Voter Registration Centre to commence the 40-day trip of a four-hour exercise. Where does automation lead to more processing points but in Nigerian MDAs? What sense does it make?

The upsurge in voter registration requests has exposed the deficiency of the INEC platform. It cannot cope, leading to a constant source of irritation. INEC has now offered the palliative of 209 additional machines. It will not suffice.

I join the many voices calling on INEC to extend the exercise by at least one month.

INEC must register all newly motivated citizens to be part of Nigeria's democracy.

I invite INEC and the other MDAs to ask the implementation agency of the BVN and ATM Cards Scheme to take them by their hands and guide them to doing it. Before the alibis come tumbling out, note that you can use your ATM cards in all the 774 LGAs. You can use it globally.

INEC should emulate the BVN and ATMs of the banking industry. The Nigerian Interbank Settlement System runs the additional security feature of the Bank Verification Number, linking the BVN to each ATM card.

"BVN verifies the customers' identity seamlessly across multiple and interoperable electronic platforms. It searches the BVN database to display relevant information about an individual. The bio-data includes names, phone numbers, addresses, and dates of birth.

"BVN is a unique identification number that can verify across all financial institutions in Nigeria. It maps a customer's BVN to the individual's biological traits: * Finger Print * Signature * Facial photograph captured at the point of enrollment.

Today, "The BVN database is the most reliable and comprehensive data source in the Nigeria Financial Industry warehousing over 38 million unique BVNs, which are intrinsic to every individual whose profile it has captured", the BVN website states.

Note that with the BVN and ATM, you can transact from your phone anywhere. INEC vends the falsehood that you must go to a physical location to cast your vote. In 2022 with all the tech platforms available in Nigeria and to all humanity?

For INEC to sell a credible claim of electronic voting, citizens should register anywhere and vote from anywhere based on that registration. That is the beauty of accurate technology that delivers a secure platform. With what INEC offers, expect a deceitful "electronic voting". INEC can and must do better for us all.

Nwakanma is a communication strategist, marketer and scholar with extensive media and industry experience consulting in Nigeria and rest of Africa

Cybercrime is spiking and security skills are scarce:
How to weather the approaching perfect storm

The world generates an estimated 2.5 quintillion bytes of data every day. Amidst this mind-boggling amount of chatter, a very real threat is lurking: cybercrime, which has increased by 600 percent since the start of the pandemic, the United Nations reports.

This surge in nefarious cyber activity kicked off when global lockdowns saw millions of employees working remotely and logging in from their unsecured home computers. According to the Fortinet Global Threat Landscape Report, 80 percent of organisations experienced one or more data breaches during 2021, with a tenfold increase in ransomware attacks alone.

Patrick Evans, Chief Executive Officer of SLVA Cybersecurity, says that cyber threats are increasing at a rate far greater than the industry is able to cope with, and small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are particularly vulnerable as the financial impact falling victim to these security breaches can result in their total collapse. A sobering thought when you consider that 43 percent of cyberattacks are aimed at small businesses, according to Accenture's Cost of Cybercrime Study, and only 14 percent are adequately prepared to defend themselves.

As the business landscape rapidly evolves, simply keeping abreast of technology advancements and security vulnerabilities is no longer enough, Evans warns. Data breach risks need to be managed strategically, and this requires a very specific skill set. "Previously CIOs and CTOs were expected to take data security into their fold, but if anything is clear from the increasing threats in recent years, it is that there is a need for a separate security role," he states.

The importance of a CISO

This is where a Chief Information Security Officer (CISO) comes in, and business owners are starting to realise the importance of this role in their organisations. "Even if a company has an accomplished and technically skilled team on board, utilising the services of an advisor with decades of experience on how to mitigate the risks and implement up-to-date security measures is invaluable," says Evans.

Not all organisations, however, have the budget or even the need for a full-time CISO, and there is currently a shortage of skilled cybersecurity professionals. The answer to this is a virtual or fractional CISO – an outsourced security practitioner who, drawing on a wealth of experience in the cybersecurity industry, can provide valuable insight, advice and mentorship to help prevent an attack or recover from one, usually part-time and remotely.

Evans outlines some of the challenges facing organisations and how a virtual CISO can help:

- **Cyberthreats are increasing rapidly**

There is a huge increase in the number of threats facing organisations, with ransomware becoming increasingly more prevalent. The LexisNexis True Cost of Fraud Study reports that cyberfraud in South Africa has increased by 41.5 percent since 2019, and new data from Mimecast's State of Email Security 2022 report found that 60 percent of South African organisations had suffered a ransomware attack in 2021, up from 47 percent in 2020.

"Ransomware does not select the type of company that is attacked; it looks for the weakest attack surfaces. SMEs, educational institutions, and those in manufacturing and other verticals are often the subjects of the most severe attacks, which can be financially crippling." This is partly because these industries have been slow to adopt a security-

first approach or do not have the funds to onboard a full-time information security officer. "It's a catch-22 situation. The most vulnerable are the ones who do not have the resources to adequately protect and mitigate attacks," says Evans.

- **Financial impacts are severe**

The financial impact of falling victim to a cybercrime, especially as an SME, can be devastating. The average cost of recovering from a ransomware attack is approximately USD$1.85 million, according to research from cybersecurity firm Sophos. Businesses, especially small and medium ones, can ill-afford such an attack.

According to Evans, "Cyberattacks do not simply take down a website. They can completely shut down business processes and, worse still, hold a company's entire IP or customer database for ransom." The result is a complete shutdown in order to recover the business, and the added risk of penalties and fines from regulators as a result of data protection laws. In many instances, these risks are not quantified nor are there adequate risk mitigation and recovery procedures put in place. "Many times, it is a tick-box exercise without ongoing processes to ensure continued compliance and protection."

- **Shortage of skills**

There is a dire shortage of cybersecurity skills globally. Fortinet reports that 60 percent of organisations struggle to recruit

Briefing# Nigeria approves migration of C-band to accelerate
5G deployment, seals Microsoft Enterprise deal

The Nigerian government has approved an Enterprise Licensing Agreement (ELA) for Microsoft products and the clearing up of C-band Spectrum to accelerate the deployment of 5G services in the country.

According to a statement by the Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy (FMC&DE), these took place during the Wednesday meeting of the Federal Executive Council (FEC), the country's highest decision making body.

Approval followed presentation of three memos by the Minister of Communications and Digital Economy, Professor Isa Ali Ibrahim Pantami.

NCC gets approval to clear C-band spectrum for 5G

Also, the "Council also approved the request of the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) to clear part of the C-

band spectrum within the country's telecommunications industry of any encumbrances and migrate the current users on affected spectrum, towards the successful roll-out/deployment of 5G technology in Nigeria.

"Furthermore, with seven and a half (7.5) years before the end of the lifetime of NigComSat-1R Satellite, operated by Nigerian Communication Satellite Limited (NIGCOMSAT), which currently operates C-Band services on the 3.4 – 3.9GHz spectrum range, NCC and NIGCOMSAT have come to an agreement to relocate/migrate the operations of NigComSat-1R C Band service to another frequency (Standard C Band) and release its current frequency for immediate deployment of 5G in the country.

Microsoft ELA is cost-reduction strategy

The government-wide ELA for Microsoft

products is a software acquisition cost-reduction strategy for government and it will be implemented by the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA), under the supervision of the FMC&DE.

"This agreement is part of the Federal Government's efforts towards keeping the cost of IT projects within sustainable levels. The Agreement will give the government access to discounted prices and other cost benefits, as well as reduce project duplication across Federal Public Institutions (FPIs). It will also guarantee proper technical support for Microsoft products and services, thereby ensuring protection against cybersecurity threats, which will guarantee availability and reliability of government IT services," noted the statement issued by Dr. Femi Adeluyi, Technical Assistant (Research & Development) to the minister.

The statement added: "The ELA will provide a projected savings of a minimum of 35% of Governments current investment in Microsoft Products and Services. This will not only substantially reduce the cost of license procurement for FPIs, it will reduce and simplify licensing complexity, facilitate accounting and cash flow predictability and monitor utilisation and impact of Government investment. The Council directed all FPIs to key into the Agreement in the procurement of Microsoft licenses and services.

Approved memos will accelerate NDEPS implementation

"The approved memos will accelerate the implementation of the National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy (NDEPS), especially the pillars on solid infrastructure (broadband) and service infrastructure (platforms).

Amazon is coming to Nigeria with its $4.9 trillion strength – Konga and Jumia beware

Its e-commerce launch to be fostered round massive infrastructures to support direct supply of goods from rural to urban centres would mean greater benefits for all actors in the production, supply chain including farmers and producers of local products. That is an edge Konga and Jumia are unlikely to firm up on. Amazon is entering the market with unmatched financial and

technical muscles. In 2021, retail Amazon's e-commerce sales amounted to approximately 4.9 trillion U.S. dollars worldwide. This figure is forecast to grow by 50 percent over the next four years, reaching about 7.4 trillion dollars by 2025.4 Feb 2022, according to Statista.

Meta launches Digital Training for NGOs across
Anglophone West Africa

Meta has officially launched the Meta Non-profit training program, a digital capacity building program for 1,500 non-profit personnel across Anglophone West Africa.

At the event which took place in Lagos recently, Meta also announced its support for Geda Digital training, a six month Social Innovators Bootcamp Program for Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). These trainings are aimed at supporting the non-profit and social impact sector across Anglophone West Africa.

"We know the value of digital skills and Meta is committed to helping non-profits and social enterprises across Nigeria acquire these skills by providing them with information that will increase their overall digital awareness" Adaora Ikenze, Head of Public Policy for Anglophone West Africa said while giving opening address during the launch event.

"We recognise the needs of these NGOs and we are excited to partner with NGOs who leverage our family of apps for impact. We are delighted to provide the required support in upskilling them to scale and strengthen the work they do within their communities".

While giving the keynote address, Maryam Uwais, Special Advisor to President Muhammadu Buhari on Social Investments, said, "We commend the initiatives of Meta towards developing people working in the non-profit sector. This investment is deeply appreciated by the Federal Government of Nigeria. Meta has continuously been a partner to the government, we must continue with this partnership to make Nigeria a better place".

During a fireside chat at the event, Adeyemi Adenike, Chief Executive Officer, FATE Foundation stressed the need for NGOs to identify cost effective methods of reaching their target audience and sharing their impact stories, especially by leveraging Meta family of apps during the chat. Buttressing this, Chidi Koldsweat, Founder/CEO, Donors for Africa Foundation, stated that the collaboration with Meta on the Geda Digital Training will be helpful in providing visibility for NGOs.

To further underscore Meta's longstanding approach to connecting with more allies and supporting NGOs that are using Meta's family of Apps for good, Meta held a series of engagements with the social impact sector in 2021, including listening sessions and training for non-profit organisations. Meta also held pilot sessions of its Meta Non-Profit program with partners in Tanzania, Nigeria and South Africa.

Applications for the Geda Digital Bootcamp and Meta Non-profit training are now open. NGOs and non-profits organisations can indicate interest for Meta Nonprofit training here (https://nnngo.org/meta-nonprofit-training-program/) and for Geda Digital Bootcamp here (http://dfageda.org/2022-applications/).

Nigeria assures industry stakeholders of commitment to boost blockchain technology

The Nigerian government has assured industry stakeholders of its commitment to create regulations that will boost effective utilisation of blockchain technology for the development of the digital economy.

Minister of Communications and Digital Economy, Prof. Isa Ali Ibrahim Pantami, while delivering a keynote address on the Applications of Blockchain Technology for Intellectual Property (IP) Enforcement at an event by American Business Council event in partnership with the United States Patent and Trademark Office, said government believes emerging technologies including blockchain hold the ace to deepening Nigeria's digital economy.

"No doubt, Blockchain technology has evolved greatly since the introduction of Bitcoin in 2008, the first decentralized peer-to-peer electronic cash system. Today, innovators in various fields are realizing the benefits behind this great technology. From medicine to agriculture, finance to governance, education to transport and across global supply chain; many sectors are looking for ways to integrate Blockchain into their infrastructures", said Panatmi who was represented by Dr. Salihu Abdulkareem Arsh of the National Centre for Artificial Intelligence and Robotics (NCAIR).

"In today's knowledge based economy, an increasing share of business value is derived via intangible assets, which means success often depends upon the ability to manage and exploit IP," noted the minister even as he stressed that "businesses require managers to effectively acquire, govern and commercialize copyright-and patent-protected content."

According to Pantami, the theme of the event: 'Blockchain for IP Enforcement; More than Crypto and NFTs' is apt and timely especially at a time when crypto currency is presently the headlines of financial losses.

Rack Centre is first IFC EDGE
certified data centre in Europe, Middle East and Africa

Rack Centre, an Actis majority owned data centre and the leading carrier-neutral Tier III data centre in West Africa, has become the first International Finance Corporation (IFC) EDGE certified data centre in Europe, Middle East and Africa.

Edge, an innovation of IFC, member of the World Bank group, is a preeminent international green certification system that focuses on empowering developers of residential and commercial buildings to deliver resource efficient buildings in a fast, easy and affordable way, enabling such developers and builders to quickly identify the most effective strategies to achieve energy saving, water saving and embodied energy materials.

This prestigious green building certification recognizes the significant savings the centre will achieve in energy and water use, incorporated as part of the design to expand the facility's IT load from 1.5MW to 13MW. On completion of this expansion, Rack Centre is forecast to achieve 35% more energy savings, which is estimated to avoid carbon emissions totalling 100 tonnes each year.

Founded in 2012, Rack Centre is the first carrier neutral Tier III Constructed Facility Certified data centre in Africa and focuses solely on providing best in class data centre colocation services and the best interconnection between carriers and customers. At Rack Centre, Infrastructure and operational efficiency are our key drivers for maintaining 100%

uptime since launch in October 2013.

Actis first partnered with Rack Centre in early 2020 as part of its $250 million African data centre platform investment. To ensure the data centre could meet the rapid growth in demand for hosting capacity in Africa, whilst at the same time reducing its environmental impact and operating costs, Actis has spearheaded a programme of green design philosophies and initiatives that will result in the data centre achieving 35% energy saving, 41% water savings and deliver a 45% saving in embodied energy in materials used.

By prioritising the development of Rack Centre's sustainability practises, the African data centre platform engaged with the IFC EDGE team on establishing an assessment tool specifically for data centres. Rack Centre will achieve these savings through a range of measures and green design principles, including switching from diesel to gas

power generation, implementing water efficient cooling systems, implementing a low energy air circulation system, and sourcing local materials and services wherever possible. Switching its power source from diesel to gas power will not only save more than $10 million a year in operating costs, but it will also reduce carbon emissions and improve air quality.

Mr Ezekiel Egboye, Rack Centre Chief Operations Officer said that "Rack Centre has a track record of setting the standard for power usage efficiency in the region." Sustainability is at the core of what we do, a quest that permeates through all our actions.

"We are delighted to be the first to be certified in Europe, Middle East and Africa, which is really a continuation of Rack Centre's firsts in Africa as it was also the first data centre to be Tier III Constructed Facility certified and has grown the most comprehensive interconnection and limitless peering ecosystem of over 45 carriers and ISPs, also bringing about interconnect efficiencies. It is an honour to receive this certification and another step in delivering sustainable digital infrastructure in the region."
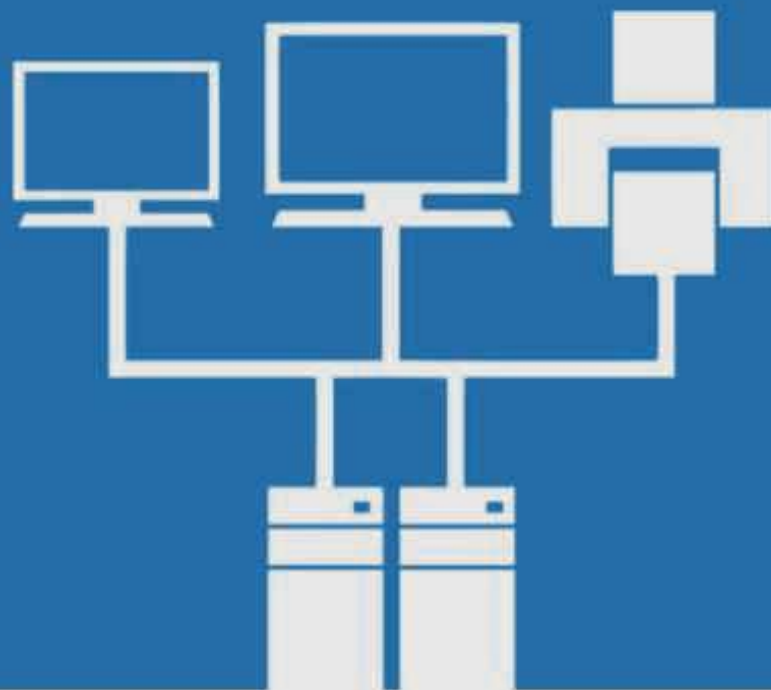
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