

Namibia makes history in IT

By Asser Ntinda

Namibia has once again made history when it became one of the few countries in the world to launch the latest innovation in internet technology, the 4G with an astonishing download speed of 150 mbps, which is 20 times faster than the current version of Netman.

Namibia's Mobile Telecommunications, MTC, launched 4G last Thursday in Windhoek. Its sheer speed in downloading huge amount of information thrilled several people who attended the demonstration.

Prime Minister Nahas Angula who launched the 4G (Fourth Generation) trial event in Windhoek described the latest innovation in internet technology as a significant leap in technology.

The Prime Minister said the

launch demonstrated how far MTC had gone in deploying its 4G technology and hoped that once completed, the entire country would benefit from faster and much improved Internet services.

The new technology can be deployed in rural areas, thus enabling many people to benefit. Just three weeks ago, the West Africa Cable Systems, WACS, landed in Swakopmund, another milestone in information technology.

Once WACS is completed, it would provide Namibians with faster Internet and more robust inter-connectivity to Europe and the rest of the world at expected cheaper rates.

"Our business and government services will be expected to be a hundred times more effective and efficient and we will have no excuse but to deliver on the expectations of our citizens," said Prime Minister

Angula.

"Nowadays, new technologies offer countries such as ours a unique opportunity to leapfrog into the future, to speed up our economic and social development and to benefit from global information network.

"We therefore cannot sit still but we are expected to respond in the most effective manner to be in tune with the times. I am glad that MTC is leaving nothing to chance by deploying technology and infrastructure that will be compatible to the demands of the WACS system."

MTC will require lots of fibre and base stations to realize the objective of launching 4G technology, and the Prime Minister urged all stakeholders to grant them their cooperation in the best interest of ICT development.

"I also pledge government's

support to create an enabling environment for you and other players to assist us to advance economic growth and poverty reduction through ICT," said Prime Minister Angula.

Portugal Telecom owns 34 per cent shares in MTC, while the remaining 66 percent is

owned by the Namibian government through the Namibia Post and Telecommunications Holdings, NPTH.

The landing of WACS in Swakopmund is expected to provide high speed telecom services to consumers in Namibia and Botswana. WACS is a

14,000 kilometer subsea cable that would bring direct connectivity between Namibia, West Africa, the UK and the rest of the world.

It has a design capacity of 5,12 terabit and cost US\$600 million.



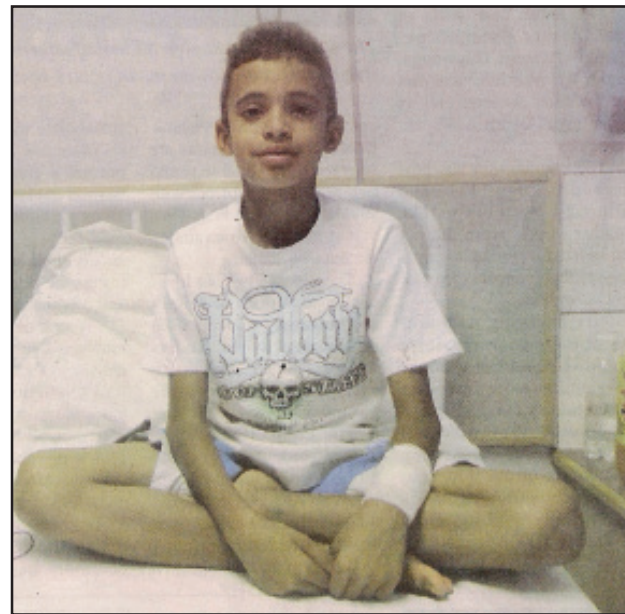
President Tarja Halonen laying a wreath at Hero's Acre. Photo by Anna Nakambale.



Back row: Windhoek City Mayor Elaine Trepper and Khomas Governor Samuel Nuyyoma. Front row: Zeinal Bava, Portugal Telecom CEO, Prime Minister Nahas Angula, Information and Communications Technology Minister Joel Kaapanda and his Deputy, Stanley Simataa. Photo by Anna Nakambale.



Portugal Telecom CEO, Zeinal Bava speaking at the launch of 4G Internet technology. Photo by Anna Nakambale.



Caption: Algino Bertolini who needs a life-saving operation which will cost N\$1,2 million. Photo courtesy of New Era.

Kamwi

from page 1

currently during an enlarged meeting of his Ministry. "The money is there for you state patients. I am tired of seeing children on television looking for private treatment saying 'I also want to look like other children.'

"I have observed that not all our medical practitioners including the private doctors are aware about the existence of the Special Fund, despite the fact that the Permanent Secretary has issued a circular to this effect. Thus I urge all regional directors to see to it that information regarding this Fund is disseminated to all."

Government established the Special Fund two years ago to facilitate treatment for such patients. It commits N\$10 million to the account every year and now it's balance is N\$20 million.

"The money is there with Standard Bank," said Minister

Kamwi. "Make use of it and advise state patients accordingly. We are tasked to save lives. We can only succeed to do that if we take our work seriously. Disseminate information so that the people out there are aware of the Special Fund."

The Special Fund was set up to assist state patients with rare conditions of illness that cannot be treated at Windhoek Central Hospital. A media release issued by the Ministry of Health and Social Services two weeks ago advised state patients with an illness of whatever type to go to the nearest public health facility.

"If a patient presents him/herself to a clinic and the health workers at that clinic cannot treat the condition of that patient, they will refer the patient to a health center or district hospital," advised the media release.

If this level cannot treat the condition of the patient, the patient will be referred to the intermediate hospital. If that level

is also unable to treat that patient, the next level is Windhoek Central Hospital. Should Central Hospital also be unable to treat such a patient, specialists there will identify where the patient can be treated and at what cost.

"The specialists will then refer the patient to where he/she is going to be treated and at the same time apply for assistance from the Special Fund if Windhoek Central Hospital's budget cannot pay for the treatment of the patient," read the media release.

"This means that only specialists at Windhoek Central Hospital can apply for financial assistance from the Special Fund. No individual patient is allowed to apply to the Special Fund."

Private patients are not allowed to be assisted by the Special Fund because they are assisted by their Medical Aids. For a patient to benefit from the Special Fund, he/she must be a state patient with a rare condition of illness that can be treated and the patient thereafter can live a productive life.

"It pains me when I see those helpless children with rare conditions looking for donations through newspapers," said Minister Kamwi. "Make use of the Special Fund by following procedures to apply for assistance."

Nine-year old Algino Bertolini was diagnosed with Caroli's Disease in 2005 and is in need of assistance. His treatment in Germany would cost a whopping N\$1,2 million. The boy has a trust fund created for him to help raise the money to cover the cost of the treatment.

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