Rwanda: Govt looks to adopt new internet technology

By Collins Mwai   27 May 2015

Rwanda could soon be making use of the latest Internet technology to develop low cost sustainable solutions for numerous sectors and to address various development challenges. The new technology is developed from the increasing network interconnection of ICT gadgets.

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Experts says the interconnections, referred to as the 'Internet of Things' by IT enthusiasts, has the potential to impact societies just as the Internet did.

To further look at the application of the increased interconnection and its relevance to development, the Ministry of Education in partnership with the Abdus Salam International Centre for Theoretical Physics and Carnegie Mellon University organised a four-day workshop bringing together participants from the East African region.

The "East Africa Workshop on the Internet of Things" hopes to equip participants with knowledge to make full use of the emerging opportunity.

Speaking at the opening of the forum in Kigali, yesterday, Prof. Mannaseh Mbonye, the principal of the University of Rwanda's College of Science and Technology, said the new technology has the potential to change the world and influence lives as the Internet did.

"We live in a world where we are increasingly using gadgets that are connected to the Internet; all of these devices are going to need to be connected to the internet. Such a scenario has presented a situation where gadgets are not only connected to the internet but are also interconnected amongst themselves," he said.

Such a scenario where our every day gadgets are connected to the internet and as a result interconnected, makes up the internet of things, Prof. Mbonye explained.

"As was with the World Wide Web in the early 1990s and the Internet in the mid-2010s, 'Internet of Things' is ushering in a new era. Just as the two did revolutionalise the world, the 'Internet of Things' is capable of much more," the principal added.

According to a concept note by the workshop organisers, the continual decrease in size, cost and energy consumption of wireless gadgets is a great facilitator to the technology as it boosts the number of mobile objects in use.

"The number of mobile objects composing of the 'Internet of Things' will significantly grow globally," Prof. Mbonye said.

"In 2020, between 12 and 50 billion devices are expected to be connected with each other. This implies that traffic generated will explode, the availability of this 'big data" can be leveraged to make inferences about many phenomena."

Giving insights into ways Rwanda could benefit from the new technology, one of the forum's facilitators, Prof. Tim Brown of Carnegie Mellon University, said such sectors as health and agriculture could benefit greatly as it would ease processes and reduce cost of services.

As part of the training, participants will go through practical projects applicable to the needs of Rwanda at Sorwathe Tea Factory in Rulindo District, install devices to measure aspects that affect the quality of tea such as humidity and temperature.

Dr Marie Christine Gasinzigwa, the director of science and technology, called on participants at the workshop to ensure that the newly acquired skills is turned into applicable solutions for development.

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