

SA Minister of Finance hails social media in budget speech



Pravin Gordhan, SA Minister of Finance

In yesterday's Budget Speech for 2010, South Africa's Finance Minister Pravin Gordhan, underlined the importance of using social media platforms to encourage public participation in the budget process.

"South Africans have come to know the "Tips for Trevor" campaign that accompanied the budget every year. Introduced by my predecessor, Minister Manuel, the campaign allowed citizens to contribute to the budget process, and I have continued to draw on this advice. We have also used new forms of media such as Facebook. I would like to thank all those that took the time to send in tips, which give us many new and creative solutions to consider", said Minister Gordhan.

According to the Minister, South Africans are taking opportunities in providing answers to issues such as youth unemployment and poverty by using social networking to spread the word and encourage job creations, skills development and entrepreneurship in the country.

"Over and above the actions of government, labour and the private sector in addressing the issue of youth unemployment, it is encouraging to see South Africans taking strides in doing what they can to provide answers", added the Minister.

Gordhan exemplified the case of Vuyisa Qabaka, a young man from Cape Town, who believes the country needs a larger budget for youth development and is in the process of launching an online social platform called Student Enterprises, to support youth job creation and entrepreneurship.

Overall, the national budget concentrated on job creation, lowering poverty and boosting economic growth, with over half of the R907 billion budget going to education, health, municipal infrastructure and housing development.

The government will spend R2.9 trillion over the next three years, with R907 billion (about \$119bln) budgeted for this year, representing an increase of 8.6% over last year's budget.

Africa Union: We must take ICT seriously



President Bingu wa Mutharika of Malawi (Source: ITU / M. Zouhri)

Bingu wa Mutharika, the African Union (AU) chairperson, has called upon member countries to take information and communication technologies seriously.

Speaking at the end of the 14th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of AU in Ethiopia on Tuesday, wa Mutharika said, giving ICT special attention would play an important part in the development agenda of the union.

He said “no child should die of hunger and malnutrition”, elaborating on the summit theme: “Information and Communication Technologies in Africa: Challenges and Prospects for Development”.

Wa Mutharika also outlined the priority areas to be considered as an immediate plan of action for the next three months. These included the putting in place of food security programs to alleviate poverty in the next five years, the need to develop transport and telecommunications and connect countries through ICT and the development of energy.

Countdown to ICT Security Africa Summit in Kenya



Bitange Ndemo, permanent ICT secretary, Kenya

Preparations for the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Security Africa Summit 2010 have begun. The event, which is scheduled for Kenya in May, and is organized by the MIS Training Institute and the African Information Security Association, is coming to Africa for the first time.

“The summit is the ideal forum for business and government leaders working in technology, information security, cyber crime and ICT audit to form frameworks and develop cyber security strategies to tackle cyber-based crime within Africa,” said the organizers.

With cyber security threats increasing at an alarming rate, the ICT Security Africa Summit 2010 is a perfect opportunity to help addressing and combating these threats.

Kenya’s permanent secretary of the ministry of information and communications, Bitange Ndemo, has confirmed support for the event and will deliver an opening keynote.

by Ubbah Otieno

Zimbabwe’s government approves national ICT plan



The Cabinet announced today the approval of the new ICT strategy plan for Zimbabwe, expected to be launched at the end of next month, according to Zim government's publication The Herald.

ICT Minister, Nelson Chamisa, commented that the approved plan would be formally presented to the country's main political parties figures President Mugabe, Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai and his deputy Arthur Mutambara before being unveiled to the public.

"The plan has been approved by Cabinet and will run from now to 2015. It is either going to be launched at the end of this month or February when the principals are back", said Minister Chamisa, adding that the plan will revolutionize the local ICT industry.

Among the issues addressed are licencing, number portability, infrastructure, mobile phone security, digital security, e-governance, e-education and e-health, as well as the overall growth perspectives for the ICT sector to "catch up" with other countries on the continent and the world.

The plan aims bridging the technology gap among Zimbabwe and its African neighbours by providing modern technology, becoming a hub of software and hardware development and establishing a consultative body to advise ICT Minister on the available policies.

Since the beginning of 2009, Zimbabwe has seen a notable progress in the accessibility of mobile phones and Internet service, estimated now at 24% comparing to an initial 10%. Fixed telecommunication accessibility is still a challenge, with the sole provided, Tel-One, overwhelmed by demand.

The government stated that it would work closely with the private sector to ensure the good implementation of the ICT plan in changing the face of the industry in Zimbabwe.