NTRC

NTRC ICT NEWSLETTER ISSUE #85   **April 2017**

Past i² Competition Participants at launch event making their presentations.

New Mobile App developed from idea submitted in NTRC's i^2 Competition

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Commerce and Trade, in collaboration with the National Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (NTRC), has developed a mobile application that allows persons to view the prices of commodities at various supermarkets in St Vincent and the Grenadines (SVG).

The mobile application, called Vincy Prices, was conceptualized by a former group of St Vincent Grammar School (SVGS) students going by the name of ECUs comprising of members Luc Telemac, Christian Friday, Jeaniel Ibrahim and Luke Bullock. The members first presented their idea during the NTRC's I Squared competition back in 2014.

Group member Bullock said that they are quite happy to see how far the idea has come and would like to see it go even further with added features.

Speaking during the launch of Vincy Prices on March 30th, 2017, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Commerce and Trade and Deputy Prime Minister Sir Louis Straker, in his address said that the objective of the app is to provide the general public with comparative prices of various commodities at different supermarkets. The decision to create the app came to motivate young Vincentians in developing mobile applications for St. Vincent and the Grenadines and even the rest of the world. The app can be downloaded from the Google Play Store and will be available soon on iOS.

Also, at the launch was young Entrepreneur, Anthony George who presented his recently launched mobile application called "LinkUp" which serves as an electronic business directory.

Source: NTRC

Being Smart Online

Check your settings

Use the privacy and security settings on social media sites so that only friends and family can see your pages.
Then speak to friends and family and encourage them to tighten their privacy settings too as they could affect you.
Even if your account is locked as private, personal information you have shared with others could still be accessed through their pages.

Guard personal information

Don't post any personal information - your address, email address or mobile number - publicly online. Just one piece of personal information could be used by a complete stranger to find out even more. If you want to include your birthday in your profile it's safer not to actually display it publicly - providing your full date of birth makes you more vulnerable to identity fraud.

Check what's needed

Don't give out information online simply because it's asked for - think whether whoever is asking for it, really needs it. When you're filling in forms online, for example to register with a website or sign up for a newsletter, always provide the minimum information possible.
Anti-virus software
Make sure you have anti-virus software installed on your computer and be careful what you download or install on your computer.

FLOW ADSL network attacked by foreign intrusion

During a press conference on Friday April 7 2017, FLOW's country manager Wayne Hull stated that their ADSL network was attacked by foreign intrusion and as a result, foreign Internet Protocol (IP) addresses began showing up on FLOW's network which resulted in legitimate IP addresses being affected on the network. The security breach was sorted out by the company's technicians who worked on the problem throughout the night on Thursday, April 6 and a solution was found around 4 a.m. on Friday, April 7 2017.

He also stated that the attack saw many requests coming to the network, trying to intrude on it and they normally experience fraudulent traffic from time to time.

He concluded by saying "Those issues are sometimes beyond our control, but I would like the Vincentian public to know that we are working towards getting our broadband service stabilized there are some things that are uncontrollable and beyond our control.

Source: Searchlight

NTRC Dominica launches Scratch IT competition

The National Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (NTRC) of Dominica started encouraging females ages 12-20 to participate in the Scratch IT Animation Competition as part of the International Girls in ICT Day celebrations on April 27, 2017. Scratch is a free platform from Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) that provides an interactive means to introduce the youth to both creative and logical thinking. Assistant Engineer, NTRC Dominica, Melisha Toussaint stated that it is their hope that this competition will help the female students take a keen interest in ICT.

Source: NTRC Dominica Facebook

ECTEL Member States To Introduce New Legislation Aimed At Managing The Telecommunications Sector

Basseterre, St. Kitts, March 20, 2017 (SKNIS): The telecommunications sector in the five Eastern Caribbean Telecommunications Authority (ECTEL) countries is expected to be boosted with the introduction of the Electronic Communications Bill, aimed at better managing the sector.

The Bill was introduced to the Federal Cabinet during a meeting on Saturday, March 18, at the St. Kitts Marriott Resort by officials from ECTEL. The Honourable Vincent Byron Jr, Minister of Communications said that there was a need to introduce the Bill so that persons can be able to understand its importance.

"The Authority has given us the opportunity to present to as many stakeholders as possible the new Electronic Communications Bill that needs to be tabled and debated in Parliament so that the regulatory framework in which telecommunications in St. Kitts and Nevis operate can be reformed, revamped and brought into being," said Minister Byron. "And so, a major function is for our team from ECTEL to introduce to Cabinet, as well as generally to our Parliamentary side of the government business, because it would require our members on the government benches to be knowledgeable of what this new Bill is intended to do, how it will fill the gaps, address any anomalies and any problems that the regulatory framework has been experiencing."

Minister Byron said that the new Bill is critical for St. Kitts and Nevis and other member states in order to be able to manage how the telecommunication industry operates, as well as a number of operations that were agreed to and which will accompany the new framework.

Deborah Bowers, General Legal Counsel at ECTEL, said that the Bill is necessary because the industry has transformed beyond telecommunications. She explained that the new Bill is committed to net neutrality, which enables access to an open internet that member states can utilize. In addition to meeting with Cabinet, the ECTEL team also met with the business community and civil society including government departments and ministries, as well as other stakeholders who depend on the telecommunications sector.

Source: The St Kitts Nevis Observer

Caribbean leaders urged to embrace ICT

St. John's, Antigua and Barbuda, (23rd March, 2017) – In keeping with the theme of ICT Week and Symposium Antigua and Barbuda; ICT – Driving 21st Century Intelligent Services, Hon. Melford Nicholas, Minister of Information, Broadcasting, Telecommunications and Information Technology stated, "ICT has disrupted the financial order. Technology has a way of working around the established order. The Caribbean should not fear the disruptive nature of ICT – but embrace it."

Minister Melford was speaking at the 15th Caribbean Ministerial Strategic Seminar in Antigua and Barbuda. He made a strong call to the region to embrace the emerging technologies as the Caribbean is facing the reality of how cash will become a thing of the past. He further added, "We should open our minds to the possibility of the financial sector. We should find ourselves a new sitting place in the world order, and if we respond well, we would find ourselves in a position to exploit opportunities."

These Seminars are designed to raise awareness of the emerging technologies, their implications for policy, legislation and regulations and their potential to foster national and regional development. It further explored new modes of providing secure financial services for all citizens, the use of cryptocurrencies, innovative ways of financing the region's ICT-enabled development, and advancing the Caribbean's participation in the information age.

Ms. Bernadette Lewis, Secretary General of the CTU, made a strong call to policy makers to examine the potential impact of ICT on development. "ICT are cross-cutting, enabling tools. It is imperative therefore that policymakers from all sectors collectively examine the impact of ICT on the development of their respective sectors," she said.

The Seminar addressed various issues critical to the region such as ICT-Enabled Financial Solutions; Financing Options for ICT projects; Security matters and 21st Century Financial Services for all, presented by a line-up of industry expert speakers.

In the spirit of strengthening ties with regional stakeholders, the CTU and BITT (a Barbados-based digital asset exchange, remittance channel, and merchant-processing gateway) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which provides the framework for collaboration, under which specific programmes, projects and activities in the field of ICT would be undertaken. One element of this MOU focuses on the promotion of financial inclusion by distributing Bitt's Mobile Wallet application throughout the Caribbean in order to financially empower each smartphone user with the ability to conduct seamless digital transactions.

Source: SKN Vibes

Flow (Barbados) goes 4G LTE

Telecommunications company Flow has announced plans to invest $80 million in Barbados this year, the second part of the company's planned $150 million investment on which it embarked last year in an effort to upgrade and expand its telecoms infrastructure there.

This announcement came as the company officially switched on its Long Term Evolution (LTE) network, ushering in the forth generation (4G) mobile technology across the island.

"This is a great achievement for Barbados and once again demonstrates Flow's ability to place Barbados ahead of the pack. Last year we invested over $70 million in our network with a further $80 million earmarked for 2017. And this proves our commitment to ensuring that Barbados remains at the leading-edge of connectivity," Managing Director of Flow Barbados Jenson Sylvester said last night at the launch of the 4G network at the company's flagship Windsor Lodge store.

The improved technology is currently available to mobile phone and tablet users with LTE compatible devices, with the exception of Apple users who will have availability in May.

To enjoy the benefits of the 4G LTE customers simply need a compatible device updated with the latest software or upgrade their SIM cards for free at any of Flow's retail stores.

LTE is a fourth generation or 4G mobile service that delivers reliable and super-fast internet on a smartphone or tablet.

It is expected that customers using the LTE network will be able to send and receive data more quickly. The technology also allows for the company to increase overall capacity to users.

"I want you to know that we will continue to invest in our networks because we see the investment as an investment in our people and the country itself. A further connected environment will certainly allow for the expansion of the business sector, greater opportunities for individuals and tangible returns for all Barbadians," Sylvester said.

Last year's investment included the rollout of the 100 per cent fibre-to-the-home network and upgrade to its 4G network.

Source: Barbados Today

Broadband providers told to improve customer service

Britain's broadband internet companies must vastly improve their customer service, the regulator has warned, after revealing that some providers had deliberately made their service worse in 2016.

Sharon White, the head of Ofcom, said the likes of BT, Vodafone and TalkTalk "dominate the list of worst-rated companies for customer service — behind even banks". She added that 13 per cent of broadband customers experience "poor service", according to Which?, the consumer rights company. "The fact that the telecoms industry is so far behind should be a concern for us all," said Ms White, as she published figures that showed the companies' poor performance. Previously, Ofcom has only published the complaints it receives on individual companies. UK broadband users have long complained they do not get the service they pay for, with speed failing to match advertised promises or patchy mobile connections.

BT, which owns Openreach, Britain's main broadband network that is used by Sky, TalkTalk and Vodafone, was fined £42m this year for not connecting its rivals to the network in an agreed time. But Ofcom's new survey shows that some broadband companies had deliberately downgraded their service levels during 2016.

Openreach offers wholesale customers a premium "one working day" option to repair faults on a line and a standard two-day option. Both Sky and TalkTalk paid for the faster maintenance option at the start of 2016 for the majority of their customers but both switched to two days later in the year. Conversely, BT swapped its own customers to the faster option last summer.

Financial Times

Virgin Media is now turning customers' home broadband routers into public Wi-Fi hotspots

UK internet service provider Virgin Media has begun turning its customers' Super Hubs - its home cable broadband modem/routers - into public Wi-Fi hotspots. The company originally trialled a similar scheme in 2015, but a wider rollout never materialized until now.

In recent days, Virgin has been emailing customers to inform them "that we're expanding the network of hotspots that Virgin Broadband customers can automatically connect to through the Virgin Media WiFi app, by adding Virgin Media Hubs, including the one in your home." The company has made it clear that the public connection is entirely separate from the service that its customers are paying for, with public access being provided through a separate IP address, and with no impact on the customer's bandwidth. If you're paying for up to 100Mbps, Virgin says, you'll continue to get the same speeds as before.

Customers are not being asked for their consent in order for their devices to used as Wi-Fi hotspots, but they can choose not to participate. A Virgin Media spokesperson told ISPreview.co.uk that customers "are given a clear and simple option to opt-out if they do not want the Hub they use to join our WiFi network. There will be more news on this very soon."

Only those customers who own a Virgin Media Super Hub v3 are affected for now, but the company is working on an update for some of its older models. It says that it expects to "complete the rollout of our services later this year."

Source: Neowin

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