NTRC

ICT NEWSLETTER

Mr. Maurice John, - CEO, M. John IT Solutions

NTRC launches 5th Annual Ideas & Innovation Competition

The National Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (NTRC) hosted the launch of its fifth annual Ideas and Innovation competition on Friday, September 8, 2017 at the Glen Campus of the St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Community College (SVGCC).

The Competition which is in its fifth year is focused on the development of mobile apps and ideas that can facilitate the implementation of new systems or improve existing systems within both the private and public sectors of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

CEO of M. John IT Solutions, Mr. Maurice John was the featured speaker at the launch. Mr. John outlined that persons can acquire the necessary skills to learn how to develop apps at no cost by looking at free Youtube videos. With such a skill of app development, persons have the power to earn an income with little investment cost. He added that app developers worldwide earned a total of $30 billion in 2016.

The launch marked the beginning of the registration period which will run until Friday, September 29, 2017. Registration forms can be downloaded from the NTRC's website or collected at the NTRC's office. Additionally, persons can register using the "NTRCs I Squared app" which is available on the Google Play Store. The competition now has 2 categories—a secondary category for seceondary school students and an open category for Vincentians under 35 years.

The Grand Finale & Prize Giving Ceremony is scheduled to take place on November 15, 2017 where teams can win up to EC$ 5000.00 in cash compliments NTRC along with other prizes from sponsors.

Source: NTRC

Social Media Security Tips

Social networks have become an integral part of online lives. They are a great way to stay connected with others, but you should be wary about how much personal information you post. Follow these tips to safely enjoy social networking:

Realize that you can become a victim at any time. Not a day goes by when we don't hear about a new hack. With 55,000 new pieces of malware a day, security never sleeps.

Think twice about applications that request permission to access your data. You would be allowing an unknown party to send you email, post to your wall, and access your information at any time, regardless of whether you're using the application.

Beware of posts with subjects along the lines of, "LOL! Look at the video I found of you!" When you click the link, you get a message saying that you need to upgrade your video player in order to see the clip, but when you attempt to download the "upgrade," the malicious page will instead install malware that tracks and steals your data.

NTRC concludes two successful Coding Summer Programs

Participants at myApp Summer Program in Union Island

The National Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (NTRC) has recently concluded two (2) myApp Summer Programs geared towards teaching young Vincentians how to develop mobile applications in the Android Platform.

One of the summer programs was held at Petit Bordel, a community in the north leeward district of St. Vincent and the other was held in Union Island which is located in the southern Grenadines.

A total of thirty-eight (38) students between the ages of 13—18 graduated across these two programs and now have the basic skills to develop mobile applications.

Participants at myApp Summer Program in Petit Bordel

Some students indicated that they will continue to learn mobile app development after the conclusion of the program as they find the field interesting. Some students already begun developing applications on their own such as calculator app, to do list app, hotel vacancy app just to name a few.

Mr. Jason Alexis, lecturer at the Petit Bordel summer program indicated that as beginners, the students performance was satisfactory within the four week period of the program.

The program was sponsored by Bank of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Flow and Digicel.

Source: NTRC

NTRC (Dominica) Internet of Things project wins FRIDA Award for Digital Innovation

The Schools' Internet of Things Weather Monitoring Station emerged winner of this year's FRIDA Award in the technical category – Innovation for Internet Development. The NTRC's proposal was selected from 312 submissions from across the Latin America and the Caribbean and won USD$18,500 towards its implementation.

The Schools' Internet of Things (IoT) project involves the building a weather station at selected schools in Dominica and developing a web platform where meteorological data will be posted to and made freely available. The students and teachers, with support from local technical volunteers, will use hardware such as raspberry pi boards, arduino, and other climatic sensors and cameras, with software which will be developed by leveraging open source solutions already available. This will require students to develop knowledge in python, php, and web server technology, as well as other internet protocols. The software will allow for the recording of data locally and posting to the school's website and also to a common website. It is anticipated that the experience gained will motivate and inspire the students to explore other IoT projects and continue the building process.

Craig Nesty, Executive Director of the NTRC said, "the NTRC is thrilled and overwhelmed to have been selected by as the winner of the most technology innovative project in Innovation for Internet Development submitted to FRIDA this year. We are encouraged that the selection committee found our project worthy.

According to FRIDA jurors, Schools Internet of Things (IoT) Weather Monitoring Stations is an experimental and innovative project that combines the Internet of Things and training for students to respond to the challenges of climate change and Caribbean countries' exposure to natural disasters.

Since 2004, FRIDA has distributed more than US $1.67 million among more than 120 innovative initiatives and projects in 19 countries throughout the region, contributing to the promotion of Internet development in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Source: Dominica Vibes

Ericsson, CWC demo gigabit LTE in Antigua and Barbuda

Ericsson and Cable & Wireless Communications (CWC) have announced the details of the successful trial of 1 Gbps speeds conducted on the 'pre-5G' network in Antigua and Barbuda. The demonstration saw Ericsson's Gigabit LTE technology tested on the live network of CWC's Flow brand, with features such as carrier aggregation, 4X4 MIMO (Multiple Input Multiple Output), and higher order modulation (256-QAM) employed to maximise mobile data speeds.

In a statement the companies added that the technology will also be used for fixed wireless access. "Currently, Flow offers an average of 3 to 5 Mbps fixed wireless services using WiMax technology; with our pre-5G LTE-Advanced services, we will be able to offer services with an average of 30 to 50 Mbps," said CWC CEO John Reid.

CWC previously revealed plans to convert Antigua and Barbuda into the first country in the region with an LTE-A Pro network. The company said it wanted to test a 5G prototype reaching 2 to 5 Gbps peak speeds later this year.
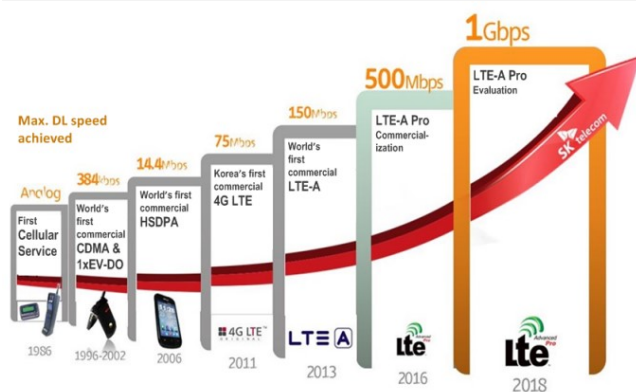
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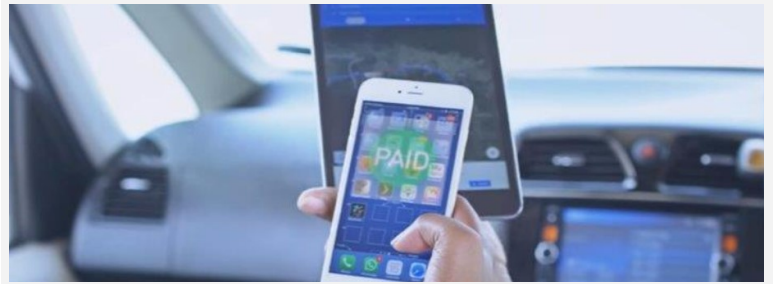
WiPay comes to T&T

A new company has been launched in T&T which promises to revolutionise the way people pay for goods and services.

WiPay, according to its chief executive officer, Aldwyn Wayne, is an online payment platform which facilitates cash transfers between parties using any smartphone device.

The system essentially replaces cash, with customers and merchants spending and receiving money via the WiPay smartphone app.

Speaking during the launch at Digicel IMAX in Woodbrook on September 3, 2017, Wayne explained that the system works as simply as "topping up" phone credit.

Users of the app can visit any National Lotteries and Control Board (NLCB) booth to purchase a WiPay voucher which is then used to top up the app.

The credit can then be used to pay for goods and services at participating stores.

It can also be used to transfer payments to persons across the world as well as to shop online without the use of a credit card.

Wayne said after travelling abroad and seeing similar systems in use, he decided this was a service that would be useful in Trinidad and Tobago.

Currently, he noted, cashless payments in T&T are limited to debit and credit cards but he noted that banks charge fees for point of sale transactions with debit cards, while not everyone has access to a credit card.

However, he said WiPay charges no transfer fees and is convenient as nearly everyone has a smartphone device.

A number of companies have already signed on to implement the payment system, including Unipet, Hubbox Grocery and Massy Stores. Massy Stores CEO Derek Winford said he hoped the system would be up and running at all branches within one to two months. Among the benefits of using this cashless system, he said, was reduced lines at the cashier and less waiting time for customers. Customers would be able to use the WiPay app to scan and pay for up to five items instantly without having to join long lines.

Items would be checked by staff upon exiting the store, he explained. "It is reinventing the way we pay," Wayne said.

Source: Trinidad Express

Hurricane Irma: ITU sends emergency telecoms equipment to the Caribbean

The International Telecommunications Union (ITU) considers emergency telecommunications an integral part of its projects to integrate information and communication technologies (ICTs) in disaster predication, detection, and alerting worldwide.

"ITU has deployed emergency satellite terminals to enhance the response effort for the Caribbean countries affected by the devastation caused by Hurricane Irma. The equipment will provide vital links to coordinate relief and rescue efforts," says Dr. Cosmas Zavazava, Chief of Department, Projects and Knowledge Management at ITU. "At the same time, ITU considers emergency telecommunications as a lynchpin to the successful implementation of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals."

ITU supports the humanitarian community before disasters strike by incorporating ICTs into disaster risk reduction measures, during disasters by supporting timely deployment of emergency telecommunications to affected areas, and in the immediate aftermath of disasters by supporting telecommunication network rehabilitation as part of recovery effort.

ITU is part of the Informal Working Group on Targets and Indicators that formulated a set of seven global targets, which were adopted as an integral part of the Sendai Framework adopted by the Third United Nations Disaster Risk Reduction Conference that was held in Sendai, Japan in 2015.

ITU is also part of the Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC), a global network of organizations that work together to provide shared communications services in humanitarian emergencies.

Source: ITU News

Facebook launches Crisis Response hub to help users during disasters and attacks

On September 14, 2017, Facebook announced a new site feature called Crisis Response, which will act as a central hub for all of the company's safety-related tools. That primarily includes Safety Check, the feature that lets Facebook users tell friends and family members they're safe during natural disasters, terrorist attacks, and other life-threatening incidents.

The center will also contain a mix of public Facebook posts, news articles, photos, and videos to keep people informed and up to date on a given crisis. Other additions include the Community Help tool, first introduced in November of last year, for coordinating help during a disaster and an all-new fundraising feature for supporting affected individuals and groups, as well as non-profits involved with relief efforts.

Facebook has for some time now recognized and reacted to its increasing role in disaster relief and its utility as a way to check in on loved ones affected by any number of potentially devastating global occurrences. Safety Check, first introduced in 2014 but deployed at a wide scale during the 2015 Nepal earthquake, has been the company's signature feature in this area, giving users a quick and easy way to mark themselves alive and well amid the chaos of an attack or natural disaster.

Safety Check can now be activated automatically by an influx of user posts and a confirmation from a third-party news or government source. That decision, made early last year, has resulted in some false scares, like a Safety Check activation in Bangkok, Thailand in December 2016 over some firecrackers that were misidentified as a bomb thanks to an outdated news story and a flood of user posts that scrambled Facebook's algorithm.

Source: The Verge

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