NTRC prepares Draft National Broadband Plan for St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

The National Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (NTRC) has prepared a Draft National Broadband Plan to be implemented by the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines utilizing services and human resources of Government departments and various stakeholders.

The proposed Draft National Broadband Plan sets out to bridge the digital divide, not only by providing high speed broadband access to the masses but by also creating opportunities for its potential and current users to utilize broadband to its fullest potential. Not only will information from the internet be retrieved, but also, opportunities will be created for an increase in local content whether it be in the form of online businesses, mobile applications or local websites. This will promote St. Vincent and the Grenadines to a leading ICT state in the Caribbean as this sector is not prevalent in the Caribbean region.

The Draft National Broadband Plan will firstly see an improvement in broadband services provided in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, however, the delivery of improved high-speed broadband alone will not be enough to achieve the aim set out in this plan. Along with these improvements, the adoption of broadband usage in the country will be promoted to ensure that broadband usage throughout the country is maximized. Additionally, the creation of local content will be promoted by ensuring that ICT entrepreneurs have the support needed to materialize their brilliant ideas. Lastly, the use of broadband will be embedded into the education curriculum to create a more diverse curriculum and also to be used as a teaching tool for teachers at all levels, ensuring that students learn to use broadband to its fullest potential. The implementation of this plan will entail the roll out of improved equipment and services by the Telecomunication providers, the promotion of broadband driven initiatives and the amendment, creation and drafting of legislations. The successful implementation of this plan will see a potential increase in revenues for St. Vincent and the Grenadines and also the advancement of the country in this ever changing digital age. The plan has been prepared and distributed to various stakeholders for their review and comments before it is finally submitted to the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines for adoption and implementation.

Source: NTRC

Tips to Reduce Mobile Data Consumption

Streaming
Be aware that high quality music streaming can use over 100MB per hour and HD video can consume about 1GB in an hour. If you must stream on data, consider choosing a lower-quality stream if available.

Mobile Friendly Websites
Use the mobile friendly version of websites. Most websites have mobile friendly versions that strip out data heavy elements such as animations and large images. You know that you are on a mobile friendly site if the web address has an "m" in front of it.

Push Notifications
Turn off push notifications for apps that you do not need notifications for. Apps with push notifications turned enabled can consume data even when they are not actively being used by you.

NTRC's i^2 Competition Grande Finale & Prize Giving Ceremony Scheduled for January 2015.

First Place winners in the Secondary School's Mobile app category in last year's competition with Senator Honorable Camillo Gonsalves, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade, Commerce and IT congratulating them on the right.

The Grand Finale and Prize Giving Ceremony for the second annual NTRC's i^2 Competition is scheduled to take place at the National Insurance Services (NIS) Main Conference Room of the NIS' Building Kingstown, St. Vincent on Thursday January 15, 2015 from 9:00 AM.

At the competition, there will be presentations from a number of secondary school finalists including the St. Vincent Girls' High School, St. Vincent Grammar School, George Stephens Senior Secondary School, Georgetown Secondary School, St. Martin's Secondary and the Union Island Secondary School each with two group entries in both Innovations (Ideas) and Mobile Applications. Additionally, there will be presentations from the Tertiary level finalists including the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Community College Division of Arts, Sciences and General Studies (DASGS) and the Division of Nursing Education (DNE).

The finalists will compete for the three coveted prizes respective of the category and institutional level ranging from $1,000.00- $3,500.00 EC.

The i^2 competition seeks to focus on the importance of idea creation and the possibilities that can develop from the seeds of innovation that are planted in the minds of our young people.

Source: NTRC

RRL Hosts 1 week HAM Radio Course
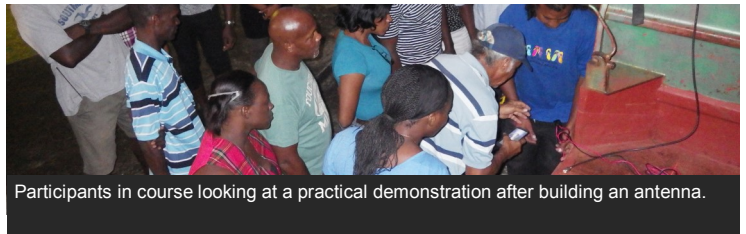
Participants in course looking at a practical demonstration after building an antenna.

The Rainbow Radio League Inc. (RRL) held a one week amateur (HAM) radio course between November 17—21, 2014 at the headquarters of the National Emergency Management Organisation. A total of sixteen persons from various professions attended this course which would equip them with sufficient knowledge to acquire a novice class radio license.

The Novice class radio license allows persons to communicate with fellow radio amateurs locally and around the world free of cost and serves an important service especially in the aftermath of any disruptive event that renders the regular telecommunications systems inoperable.

The course covered radio frequency spectrum management for radio amateurs, the international phonetic alphabet, antenna theory and construction as well as radio terms and etiquette. Also included in the course was a mini simulation preceded by an emergency message handling exercise. At the end of the course, there was a multiple choice exam that was administered by the NTRC. Persons who passed this course would be eligible to apply for their Novice Class License at the NTRC.

Source: RRL

Digicel against CWC/Columbus acquisition.

DIGICEL Chairman Denis O'Brien argued his company's case against the proposed acquisition of Columbus Communications by Cable & Wireless Communications (CWC) in Trinidad, insisting that the purchase will create a monopoly. At the same time, O'Brien told a meeting of the Caribbean Telecommunications Union at Cascadia Hotel on December 10 that had Digicel bought Columbus, the prospect of a monopoly would not exist. "To say that a merger between Digicel and Columbus would be exactly the same as a merger between Cable and Wireless and Columbus is actually a silly position to take," O'Brien said. "I think you all can see the ill-conceived PR strategy that was being deployed here, right out of the gate here.

"That is not to say that any Digicel acquisition of Columbus would not have attracted regulatory scrutiny; of course it would have, O'Brien said.

However, he argued that Digicel would not have gone public and sought to dictate ridiculous timelines to regional regulators from the get-go. Read more

ECTEL to analyse US$ 3 billion acquisition of Columbus Communications by Cable & Wireless Communications (CWC).

The Eastern Caribbean Telecommunication Authority (ECTEL) will closely analyse the impact of a proposed US$ 3 billion acquisition of Columbus by Cable and Wireless Communications (CWC). ECTEL stated this intention as part of the closing statement it issued following a special meeting of its Council of Ministers in St Lucia on December 4, 2014.

One of ECTEL's resolutions arising out of that meeting was to "undertake an analysis on the impact of the proposed merger in conjunction with the Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago (TATT)." TATT chairman Selby Wilson said the Authority hopes to complete its review of the proposed acquisition by end of January 2015.

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the proposed acquisition. ECTEL said its Council of Ministers noted that while it has been informed of the proposed merger, "no applications have been made in any of the countries where the market will be affected."

Those countries are Grenada, St Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. ECTEL also noted that while markets in Dominica and St. Kitts and Nevis will not be affected, " these countries supported the decisions taken by the Council." Observing there has been a high level of mergers and acquisitions involving major telecommunications providers, especially over the last two years, ECTEL said, " This was the case in the entire Caribbean region." ECTEL said in the review of the proposed acquisition, its Council of Ministers noted that "potential new scenarios will emerge where monopolies or near monopolies will exist in the provision of fixed network services which will have an impact on both residential and business consumers."

Source: <ins>Newsday</ins>

OAS supports Suriname in development of national cyber security plan

The Organization of American States (OAS) on December 16, 2014 concluded a two-day mission in Suriname for preparatory meetings geared towards information gathering to assist in the development of a National Cyber Security Plan.

This mission consisted of an initial assessment of the current cyber security situation in the country, through the convening of stakeholders from a number of sectors, such as government, civil society, academia, and critical infrastructure operators. Facilitated by OAS experts, discussion groups were organized to identify cyber security gaps and needs.

Taking into account that each member state has different cyber security priorities and necessities, and that each country must find a plan that meets its unique needs, the OAS mission in Suriname adopted a comprehensive and multi-stakeholder approach, in which participants strongly collaborated with their different perspectives about the matter.

Following these discussions, the OAS will assist Suriname in the preparation of an implementation outline that will include a framework of tangible actions to be accomplished within a specific time frame.

Neil Klopfenstein, executive secretary of the OAS Inter-American Committee against Terrorism (CICTE), said that the Organization is pleased to collaborate with the Government of Suriname to provide support for the development of its cyber security capacity.

"The commitment and leading role being played by Suriname's Presidential Office demonstrates the priority given to this initiative," said Klopfenstein.

The OAS cyber security program has been working with Latin American and Caribbean countries on cyber security issues over a decade, "playing a leading role in fostering a secure cyber space in the region," Klopfenstein stressed.

In addition to its recent work with Suriname, the OAS has helped Colombia, Panama, and Trinidad and Tobago to draft and adopt their national cyber security strategies. The OAS has also initiated the national strategy development process in Dominica and Jamaica, and is planning to assist Paraguay and Peru to develop their cyber security strategy and Colombia again to renew theirs.

Source: <ins>Caribbean News Now</ins> via <ins>ICT Pulse</ins>

Indian Department of Telecommunications seeks more time to complete Broadband Project

The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) in India has approached the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) for a nine-month extension of the national broadband project rollout deadline to December 2016, citing delayed procurement of key devices that will carry voice, data and video signals over a countrywide fibre-optic network at very high speeds.

These devices, known as Gigabit Passive Optical Network, or GPON, systems, will be used for taking high-speed internet to remote areas to expand broadband penetration.

The PMO's call for concluding the entire national broadband rollout by March 2016 "is very ambitious as delivery of GPON just cosmmenced," said DoT in an internal note to the PMO, a copy of which was seen by ET. Thystems has only exercise involves laying fibre of a total length of about 6 lakh kilometre.

Apart from delayed supplies of GPON devices, DoT has sought additional time since telecom ducts that will be used for laying optic fibre cables across India also remain in short supply, which in turn has hit trenching and cable-laying operations. The PMO, however, is learnt to be firm about the March 2016 deadline for concluding the national broadband project as it is positioned as the backbone of the Rs 1.13 lakh-crore Digital India programme, through which the government aims to deliver e-services to rural end-consumers, which could be homes, schools, hospitals, banks or other institutions.

Also, the national broadband rollout is already three years behind schedule and the government is loath to add to this.

In the immediate term, DoT has initiated steps to treble manufacturing capacity of fibre ducts at state-run telecom factories from 2,000 km a month to 6,000 km a month.

Source: India Times

Google calls on FCC to mandate line-sharing

In the ongoing battle between net neutrality advocates and the ISPs, one of the hot-button issues that's emerged is whether or not ISPs should be regulated as common carriers. Such regulation under Title II of the Communications Act of 1934 would require that carriers share access to their lines and fiber networks. Now, Google has weighed in on the issue, reminding the FCC that reclassifying companies like Comcast would serve the public interest and advance the deployment of high speed Internet.

Common carriers were historically understood to provide many benefits, including substantial economic ones. One of the most common complaints from the telcos and cable companies is that the cost of building fiber networks (or, in the case of the proposed T-Mobile/AT&T merger, 4G LTE networks), is that it costs too much to be economically viable. AT&T has made and broken repeated promises about network rollouts, often citing cost (Ars Technica has a summary of the shenanigans there over the years). Verizon stopped deploying FiOS citing construction costs and the difficulty of ramping the service in new markets.

Two years ago, an excellent piece by Bruce Kushnik skewered these claims by showing that Verizon's total construction costs were dropping year-by-year, even as it claimed that FiOS was costing it more and more money. Despite securing additional money specifically for FiOS upgrades, the company never spent more cash in real dollars — it just used the state funding it received to pay for fiber, then cut the money it would've spent on other networks to allow them to degrade. In Verizon's case, it actively turned to tearing them out. This kind of bait-and-switch is what makes complaints that regulation represents unfair intrusion into the free market so damned egregious. For decades, the telecommunications industry has collectively gone running to Congress, crying about the need for a greater slice of the tax revenue and service fee pie, yet simultaneously resisting oversight. It has paid for legislation in nearly half the states that prevents municipalities from building or funding their own broadband services, even in areas the carriers themselves don't want to service. Comcast saw nothing wrong in telling Congress it had to buy NBC to protect itself from Time-Warner in 2009, only to argue five years later that no, it didn't compete with Time Warner Cable at all. In fact, the two were actually complementary providers.

Source: Extreme Tech

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