

How Internet shutdown will affect you

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The temporary shutdown will affect public Internet access, SIM card sales and registration, and limiting out-bound data roaming.

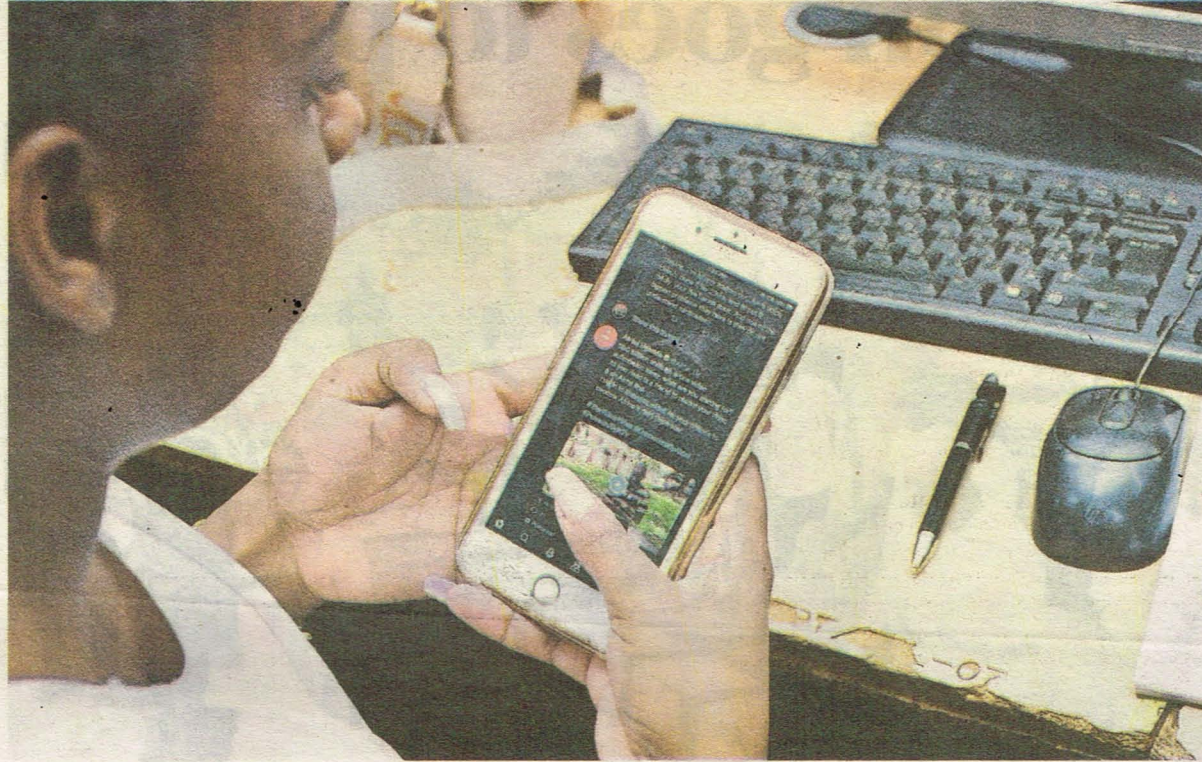
BY ISMAIL MUSA LADU

The suspension of the Internet, which the Uganda Communications Commission (UCC) referred to as temporary, will hit you in more ways than intended by the authority.

Last evening, the communication sector regulator ordered the temporary suspension of public Internet access and specific mobile services in anticipation of the general elections set for tomorrow.

However, service providers—many of whom rely heavily on the Internet—remain concerned that this routine government intervention will inflict wider damage on the digital economy beyond its stated security goals.

Following security recommendations, the UCC issued a directive that although many people appear to be opposed to, saw it coming for days if not weeks.



Industry players say beyond what the government targets to curb, mobile money transactions, which heavily rely on active Internet, would be among the casualties of the government action. PHOTO/FILE

The temporary shutdown will affect public Internet access, SIM card sales and registration, and limiting out-bound data roaming.

According to UCC, essential services like healthcare and banking are reportedly exempt. But players, who rely on the Internet either partially or fully for their operations, fear that this move may also affect other virtual operations.

The regulator has made it clear that

the suspension was necessary to combat online issues and prevent incitement of violence during the election period.

Industry players say beyond what the government targets to curb, mobile money transactions, which heavily rely on active Internet, will be among the casualties of the government action.

MTN alone handles in excess of Shs430 billion (\$100 million) daily, in-

volving millions of transactions, highlighting its critical role in the economy for everyday payments.

The entire market sees even larger volumes, with a large portion being small-value transactions, an indication of heavy usage by the majority of households that could be outside the formal banking services.

This also shows how important mobile money is as a financial inclusion

AGENT BANKING

As of 2026, agent banking in Uganda transacts an estimated Shs80.5 billion per day, will also be a causality of the temporary suspension of Internet.

Agent banking is a model where banks partner with local businesses or agents to offer basic financial services like deposits, withdrawals, and transfers in areas without physical branches, reaching unbanked and remote populations.

The aforementioned figure is derived from the latest Bank of Uganda (BoU) Integrated Annual Report for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025, which reported a total annual transaction value of Shs9.4 trillion.

tool in an economy like Uganda, which is largely informal.

In Uganda, the total value of mobile money transactions reached approximately Shs326.3 trillion for the year ending June 30, 2025. This translates to an average of roughly Shs894 billion exchanged daily across the entire industry.

As of September 2025, there were 35.6 million active mobile money accounts in the country, according to UCC.

This was corroborated by a Bank of Uganda analysis, which noted that a significant majority of these exchanges, which is about 92, are low-value transactions under Shs50,000.