

National News

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The government, in 2021, projected to create at least two million ICT jobs by the end of 2025.

BY BUSEIN SAMILU

The Information, Communication, and Technology (ICT) sector has created more than 750,000 jobs in the last three years, boosting the total number of employed Ugandans to 1.3 million.

This revelation was made by Dr Aminah Zawedde, the permanent secretary of the Ministry of ICT and National Guidance, in a speech that was read by Mr Moses Watasa, the ministry's commissioner in-charge of information and communication, during the 23rd graduation ceremony of Kampala University yesterday.

Dr Zawedde, through Mr Watasa, informed the congregation that the government has, in addition, extended internet connection to 64 percent in the last three years, with the major target of connecting the whole country.

"We want to ensure that the internet is accessible in the whole country and also reliable and affordable. The target is to also make devices like smartphones and computers affordable," she said.

The government was moved to comment after officials from the university, led by the Vice Chancellor, Prof Badru Dungu Kateregga, urged the government to speed up the establishment of enabling infrastructure and policies

'ICT sector jobs grow to 1.3 million in 3 years'

that will help in speeding up ICT innovations.

Prof Kateregga said the university is prioritising ICT innovations, and called for government support so that 'brilliant ideas don't die prematurely'.

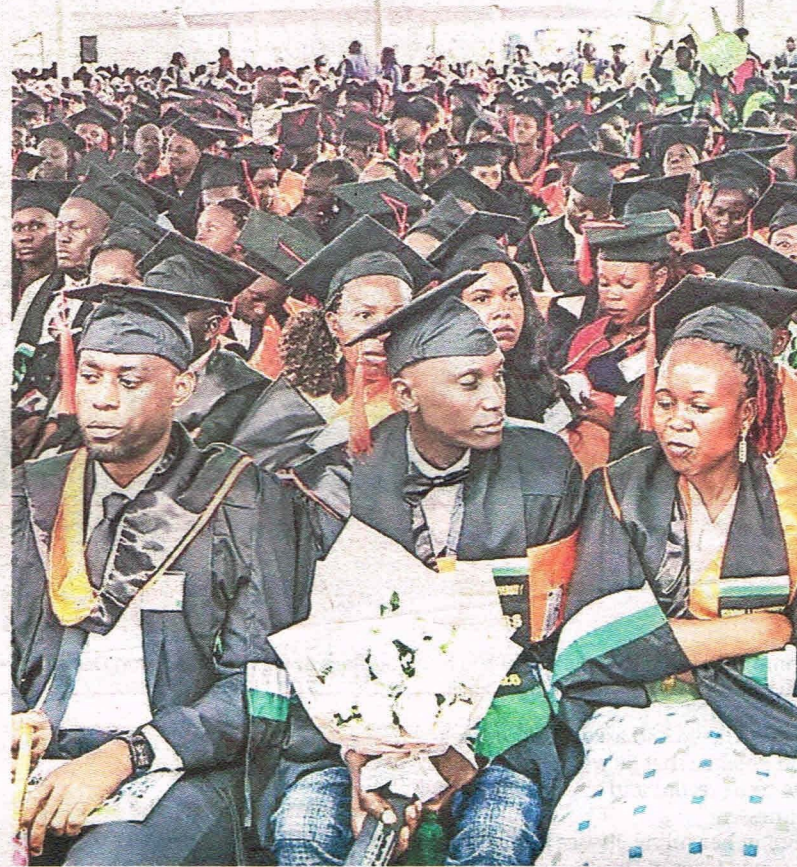
"I urge the government to strengthen collaboration with universities to advance innovation. Students and academic staff are generating impactful ideas with the potential to transform key sectors and drive national development, yet many remain underutilised due to limited support," he said.

Prof Kateregga added: "The government should take deliberate steps to identify, nurture, and invest in these innovations, providing funding, policy support, and platforms to scale them into solutions that benefit the nation."

Dr Zawedde, however, said the government had already taken that path, which is critical in leading Uganda's quest to become a \$500 billion (Shs1.84 quadrillion) economy by 2040.

"When you look at the National Development Plan IV, which was launched last year, ICT and Innovations have been placed at the forefront to lead Uganda in Vision 2040 and attaining a \$500b GDP," Dr Zawedde said, in the speech Mr Watasa delivered.

Speaking to this publication yesterday, Dr Zawedde reiterated her message, adding that Uganda's journey towards prioritising ICT innovation is un-



Graduands at Kampala University yesterday. Prof Maggie Kigozi, who officiated at the function, urged them to use social media responsibly and to adapt to the demands of the marketplace. PHOTO/IBRAHIM KAVUMA

stoppable.

"The President is very emphatic in improving the lives of Ugandans, especially the young people, leveraging science, innovation, and technology that, through ICT, we can see our young Ugandans getting jobs, creating solutions, and improving communities where people live," she said.

Dr Zawedde added: "We have set up innovation hubs, including the National ICT innovation hub in Nakawa, but regional hubs like Kabale University in the southern part, at Soroti and Busitema University in the East, in the North, we have set up at Muni University. In Fort Portal, we shall also go there. One may wonder why universities; we believe they have the capacity to protect this infrastructure."

The government, in 2021, projected to create at least two million ICT jobs by the end of 2025.

By September 2024, the sector had created 539,900 jobs for Ugandans in six innovations.

One innovation was a business registration system, which had registered 60,000 businesses and generated Shs90b in revenue, and employed 58 young Ugandans directly working on system development, and 233,188 people indirectly working as agents to support business registration applicants

ABOUT THE GRADUATION

The graduation at Kampala University was held under the theme: Empowering a New Generation: AI, innovation, and sustainable development. A total of 3,514 people attained various academic qualifications across different disciplines. Of these, 1,812 (51.6 percent) are female.

The ceremony coincides with the commemoration of the university's 27 years of existence.

across the country.

Other innovations were the integrated health information management system installed in 10 regional referral hospitals and managing patient data, the electronic document record management system managing government records, the electronic government procurement system (e-GP) aimed at improving public sector procurement processes, and the education management information system (EMIS used to register students and teachers in schools across the country).

Dr Zawedde told this publication that with these systems in place, there have been significant improvements in transparency, accountability, service delivery, and revenue generation for the government.

In her speech yesterday, Dr Zawedde reiterated that the ministry has intensified efforts in establishing regional ICT hubs in eastern, western, and northern Uganda, to supplement the main one located at the National ICT Hub in Nakawa, Kampala, to help young innovators.

"The hubs provide them with the support of infrastructure in terms of computers and internet connectivity, as well as mentorship and business advisory services. The revamp of the hub has increased the overall utilisation of the facility, which includes digital literacy training," she said.

Dr Zawedde added: "The government will continue supporting universities like Kampala University to ensure that we develop innovations into meaningful products."

Mr Watasa announced that the government had donated 30 computers to Kampala University to support its ICT efforts.

In August 2023, the government launched the Digital Transformation Roadmap, which had been developed by the ICT ministry with support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). It was launched by President Museveni.

The roadmap has five pillars: infrastructure, digital services, cyber security, digital skilling, and innovation and entrepreneurship.

Dr Zawedde said the roadmap, which is running between 2023 and 2028, will create 300,000 jobs as the government extends internet connections to at least 600 health centres, all 146-district headquarters, among other developments.

She said the roadmap aims to empower individuals, businesses, and communities to partake fully in the digital economy and access essential services that can improve livelihoods.

To further cast the net wide, the Cabinet in September 2023 also approved the National Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) Policy, increasing Uganda's chances of emerging as Africa's pre-eminent outsourcing destination.

The policy encompasses a multifaceted strategy to cultivate a flourishing BPO ecosystem, seeks to streamline business processes, ensure cost-effectiveness, expand market access, nurture skilled talent, and develop cutting-edge infrastructure.

The government also plans to create another 6,000 jobs in the ICT sector in the ongoing Uganda-Japan (UJ) Connect project, which is still to date being implemented by the Ministry of ICT and National Guidance and the state-owned Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

Dr Zawedde said UJ Connect is one of the projects being implemented by the ministry in the government's drive to achieve the pillars of the digital transformation roadmap.