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BY SYLVIA NAMAGEMBE

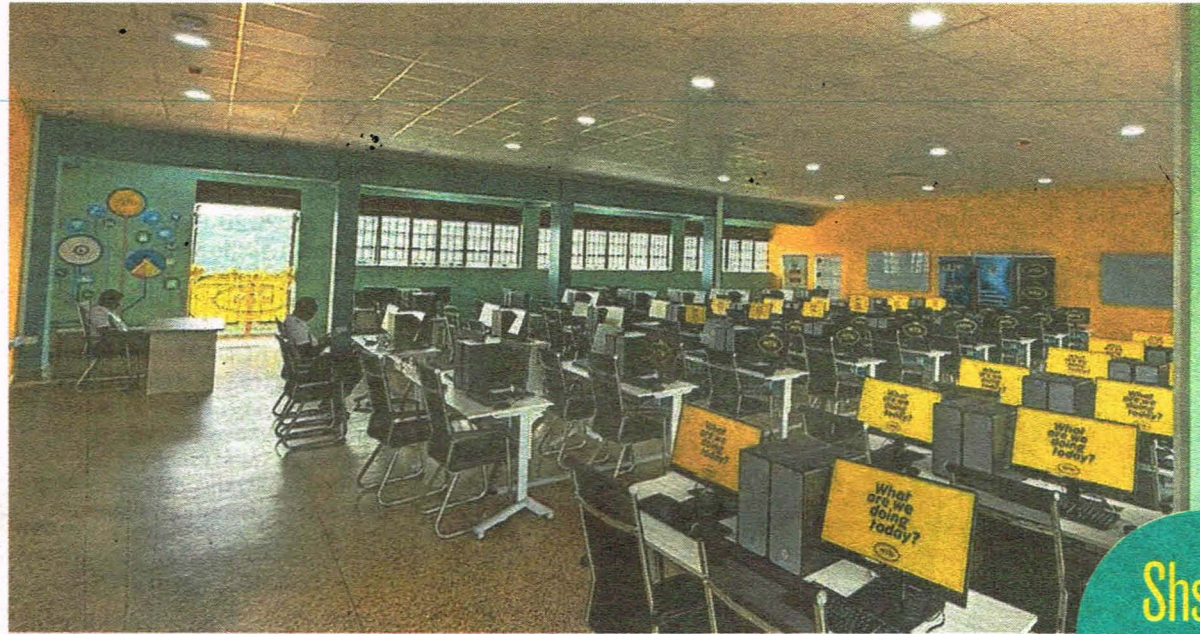
The Ministry of ICT and National Guidance has commissioned a regional innovation hub at Kabale University as part of efforts to expand digital skills training and innovation infrastructure beyond Kampala.

It is the first in a four-regional hub roll-out, with Busitema University next in May, followed by Gulu and Soroti universities. Government officials said the network is expected to serve more than 20,000 students and surrounding communities once fully operational.

The facility, known as the MTN Spark Hub, has been established in partnership with MTN Uganda's Foundation and Centenary Technology Services under the MTN ACE Programme. Under the programme, four regional hubs will be established and the National ICT Innovation Hub in Nakawa, Kampala will be refurbished. The Shs4 billion project is expected to be completed in three years.

Speaking at the commissioning yesterday, Dr Amina Zawedde, the permanent secretary in the Ministry of ICT and National Guidance, said the hub reflects the government's strategy to decentralise digital infrastructure and bridge the urban-rural digital divide driven through youth participation.

Govt opens Kabale varsity hub to boost digital skills



Students inside the newly-launched Kabale University regional hub yesterday. PHOTO/COURTESY

"Uganda's Digital Transformation Roadmap is clear. We need innovation and digital skills infrastructure that reaches every region of this country, not just Kampala. This facility is part of that effort to ensure young people outside the capital have access to tools and spaces for innovation through prioritising digital infrastructure, cybersecurity, e-services, and innovation ecosystems," she said.

Dr Zawedde added that the Digital Transformation Roadmap (2024-2028) places digital skills development and innovation ecosystems at the centre of Uganda's economic transformation

agenda, with a target of 90 percent broadband coverage nationwide.

Government data shows that more than 75 percent of Uganda's population is under 30, while youth unemployment stands at 16.1 percent according to the 2024 National Census.

The Kabale University Vice Chancellor, Prof Joy Kwesiga, welcomed the facility, saying it strengthens the institution's ability to link academic training with practical innovation.

"This facility gives our students and the surrounding community a space equipped for innovation and connected to the digital economy. It helps bridge the gap between academic learning and the skills required in the labour market," she said.

The hub has been fitted with computers, high-speed LAN connectivity, CCTV systems, air conditioning, and flexible collaborative workspaces. According to implementers, the design prioritises group work, experimentation, and problem-solving rather than traditional classroom set-ups.

Prof William Bazeeyo, a board member of the MTN Uganda Foundation, described the Kabale hub as part of a wider decentralisation effort aimed at spreading digital infrastructure across the country. He added that the Shs4 billion investment across four regional hubs aligns with Uganda's Fourth National Development Plan (NDP IV), which targets the creation of nearly 885,000 jobs annually and prioritises the knowledge economy as a key growth driver.

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Shs4b
INJECTED IN
FOUR HUBS