IBM launches Mainframe Innovation Hub

IBM last week announced the opening of a new Mainframe Cloud Innovation Hub to extend its capabilities in delivering high capacity technology solutions to South African companies and government organisations.

Image: www.freedigitalphotos.net

Located in the IBM Client Centre in Johannesburg, South Africa, the Mainframe Linux & Cloud Innovation Hub is reportedly the first of its kind facility on the continent, and will serve to showcase Mainframe technology and capability to universities, government departments, ministries, banks and private organisations from various sectors. With access to extended Big Data, Analytics and Cloud computing technologies on the mainframe the intent is to help those parties solve challenges across a broad spectrum of areas ranging from applied research to academic enablement.

The facility, currently leveraging a z/OS and Linux based Mainframe Server and Enterprise Storage, will be leveraged to house user cases and demos on specific solution areas including cloud, mobile and smarter cities Intelligent Operations Center (IOC). The facility will also have the capability to run onsite proof of concepts for zLinux, Cloud and Mobile.

The Hub's technical experts will be part of a worldwide virtual team located in Boeblingen (Germany), Poughkeepsie (United States), Gaithersburg (United States) & Montpelier (France). Future plans include enabling the facility to deliver demos and proof of concepts in Analytics

"Cloud computing on the Mainframe offers unprecedented opportunity to fast track innovation in the enterprise environment and private companies, IT partners, public sector heads and academics are anxious to better understand how technology can help transform their processes." says Abe Thomas, country general manger of IBM South Africa.

"The competencies will enrich the capability of both IBM and its partners to deliver cloud-based solutions around analytics and mobile to governments, the private sector and enhance understanding of System z technology by academic students

as seen recently concluded Master the Mainframe competitions held in Kenya and South Africa," adds Thomas.

Mainframe ecosystem to be developed

IBM is working with industries to develop a vibrant mainframe ecosystem. For instance, First National Bank (FNB) has seen incredible growth across mobile banking channels due to its mainframe environment. The mainframe is at the heart of FNB's drive to deploy mobile "bank-in-a-box" solutions that deliver financial services over any channel in near-real time and a new confidence in the institution.

Alongside its investment in the two new hubs in Nairobi and Johannesburg, IBM will also be extending its ability to provide pan-African capability for the mainframe through a new partnership with Business Connexion (BCX).

"This expanded connection to our region will position IBM and its System Z portfolio even closer to clients," said Jacques Loubser, General Manager for Business Connexion. As Africa's largest IT service provider, Business Connexion has used the mainframe to build and deploy an end-to-end cloud offering that enables us to provide seamless and continuous service to customers across Africa."

Over the last 50 years, the mainframe has been the backbone of some of the world's most critical and sensitive workloads and industries. Unceasingly adapting to evolving trends, the IBM Mainframe secures the era of cloud, analytics, mobile and social. All of which are possible through new technologies built in collaboration with our clients and bolstering the skills of future mainframe enablers and innovators in over 1000 universities, from 67 countries.

This is one of the reasons that 92 of the top 100 worldwide banks, 21 of the top 25 Insurance organisations, 23 of the top 25 retailers and the majority of credit card transactions rely on the Mainframe, the only commercial platform with EAL5 security classification.

Linked to IBM's global network of over 40 Cloud Innovation Centers, the two facilities are the latest in a series of investments IBM has made to develop more capacity in Africa in the last four months.

In February, the company announced two new Innovation centers in Nigeria and Morocco. The IBM Research - Africa lab - the first of its kind on the continent - will also receive $100 million over the next ten years to create solutions for Africa through an initiative known as 'Project Lucy'.