

Airtel launches 3G service in Central Africa

Airtel and the Republic of Congo, yesterday, 25 October 2011, took a step towards building, what is reported to be the largest 3G network across Africa, by announcing the launch of a 3,75G platform in the country.



The launch follows the successful application and issuance of a 3G license by the Republic of Congo. The issuance of the license is a significant move by the Congolese Government and a milestone in a region that is set to embrace first world mobile platforms. This is the first 3G license issued in Central Africa and the second amongst the French-speaking African nations, after Senegal.

Improved technology

The launch of the 3G platform promises profound changes to how subscribers in the region experience the web on internet-enabled devices. The improved technology will enhance multimedia functionality, high speed mobile broadband and internet access which will allow users to make video calls, watch live TV, send and receive emails and download music from the devices.

This is the latest global HSPA+ technology with 21 mbps, also being rolled out in Europe and the USA. It is the fastest 3G available and will benefit a variety of users, including large corporates, small or medium businesses and the youth.

"3G technology will give our customers the opportunity to interact with data in a different way," explained Tiemoko Coulibaly, CEO Airtel Africa, Francophone.

"This is why Airtel doesn't see 3G as a product but a platform that enables the community expand its social and commercial horizons, alongside the rest of the world." said Coulibaly.

According to Coulibaly, Airtel will be rolling out its data network across all its markets with the objective of building the largest 3G network across the continent, and will continue to provide useful and innovative services to make use of this new technology.

Managing director of Airtel in Congo, Beston Tshinsele said, "We are grateful to the Republic of Congo, represented by The Honorable Minister of Posts, Telecommunications and New Technology of Communications Mr. Thierry MOUNGALLA today, for issuing the license through the country's regulator - Agence de Régulation des Postes et des Communications

Electroniques - and sharing our vision of enhancing the country's telecommunication platform. This has the capability to enhance social, cultural and commercial participation amongst the citizens of Congo and also the global community."

Tshinsele added, "Our 3G platform will allow subscribers to combine the enormous potential of the internet with the convenience of cellular phones and other devices. It will liberate the potential of our youth through enabling fast access to the internet for learning, sharing, social networking, creating and accessing content like music. For the small and medium business, it will enable the entrepreneur to embrace a highly mobile way of working with high speed access to email and internet and it will allow large companies to increase productivity through vastly enhanced mobile internet speeds and access to record and allow for communication via video calls on handsets."

Airtel's commitment

Airtel has remained committed to deepening its network coverage and bringing communication opportunities to rural populations that, until now, have been left out of the telecommunications revolution. This will work in tandem with the availability of 3G to ensure that Airtel can provide Congo with a level of internet access across the country that can help bridge the digital divide.

"Africa is an emerging market and subscribers all over the continent are increasingly demanding better network quality and superior services. We have partnered with Bharti Airtel to deliver the right infrastructure and solutions to help them meet these demands." says Dimitri Diliiani, head of Africa Region, Nokia Siemens Networks.

"With our strong products and services portfolio, we will partner and support Bharti Airtel to deliver HSPA+ technology, which will enable their customers in the Republic of Congo to enjoy high-speed mobile Internet services. This technology will enable Bharti Airtel deliver a unique experience to their customers."

According to data from McKinsey & Co. Telecommunications, there are currently about 400 million mobile subscribers in Africa, and is one of the continent's fastest growing industries with a rapidly expanding cellular phone market that now includes internet access, mobile banking and mobile commerce.

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