

Telecel Zim faces closure

Cabinet has set up a committee to begin the process to get Telecel Zimbabwe cease operations in line with a directive by the Ministry of Information Communication Technology, Postal and Courier Services after the mobile phone operator breached empowerment regulations and payment of its licence fees.



ICT Minister Supa Mandiwanzira told a media briefing yesterday that Government would take into account the welfare of workers and subscribers in executing its decision to enforce the law.

The Cabinet committee is chaired by Youth, Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment Minister Christopher Mushohwe.

"The position of the Ministry of ICT that Telecel must cease operations because they have no licence is a position that has already been adopted by Cabinet," said Minister Mandiwanzira. "There is a Cabinet committee in place to now execute the decision of Cabinet."

Minister Mandiwanzira said Government's position was that Telecel Zimbabwe did not have an operating licence and the authorities were following laws dealing with the issue of non-compliance by the mobile operator.

"Government does not operate in a manner that is unfair to the other parties; we will follow processes and those processes are underway to deal with that issue," he said. "Government will deal with this issue knowing that there are employees involved and also subscribers in mind. That notwithstanding, the law is the law."

Minister Mandiwanzira said his ministry raised the red flag following failure by Telecel Zimbabwe to honour its side of the bargain despite having operated through an agreement in which it had negotiated softer terms with the authorities. "That's why we raised the red flag," he said.

"We are glad that that red flag has been noted by everyone and that matter is being addressed. Our position has now been adopted by Cabinet that Telecel has been operating without a licence."

Minister Mandiwanzira said Telecel breached two major principles; one on local empowerment and payment of the licence fees. "Those things are now being addressed directly between Telecel and the regulator who is empowered by law to deal with truant or non-compliant players in the industry," he said.

Minister Mandiwanzira also said in the next two weeks, Cabinet would deliberate on ICT policy which is currently under review. The national ICT policy will be subjected to scrutiny at the E-tech Africa expo which starts today at the Harare International Conference Centre.

The two-day event will see the ICT Ministry hosting its flagship expo under the theme; "The Internet of Things and Everything". The expo will run concurrently with a conference running under the theme; "Promoting Innovative Technology for Development".

"It is important to note that one of the highlights of the expo will be a consultative forum on the finalisation of the national ICT policy," said Minister Mandiwanzira.

Since 2011, Government has been working on a review of the national ICT policy which will regulate how the industry is organised and the impact of ICTs on the lives of ordinary Zimbabweans.

"This is a very important forum and we have reached a point where we must finalise the national ICT policy through this consultative process on Friday," said Minister Mandiwanzira.

"Once we conclude this consultative process we will take the final document to Cabinet for approval and adoption. This is an opportunity for every stakeholder to be involved. So we invite every stakeholder who has a position, especially around issues of ICT, to be part of the conference on Friday."

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