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CEO of Lawyers Hub Part of the Commonwealth Observers in Nigeria's Elections

We are delighted to report that our Lawyers Hub CEO Linda Bonyo was part of the Commonwealth Observers Group that monitored the recent presidential and parliamentary elections in Nigeria. This was a significant appointment, and it demonstrates the high level of trust and respect that Bonyo has earned among her peers in the legal community.

As a member of the Commonwealth Observers Group, Bonyo played a critical role as part of the commonwealth observers in Nigeria. Her duties included observing polling stations, meeting with government officials, civil society groups, and other stakeholders to gain a comprehensive understanding of the electoral process.

Bonyo's appointment as a Commonwealth Observer is a testament to her vast experience and expertise in legal matters. She is an accomplished lawyer, who has worked with several high-profile clients in various sectors, including technology, finance, accelerators, tech policy and startups. Her work has also focused on promoting use of technology in Africa and good governance, which aligns with the Commonwealth's core values.

Commenting on her experience, Bonyo said, "It was a great privilege to be part of the Commonwealth Observers Group in Nigeria. The elections were crucial for the country, and I am glad that I was part of the great commonwealth team. I believe that the Commonwealth has an important



role to play in promoting democracy and human rights across the globe, and I am proud to have been part of this effort."

Bonyo's participation in the Nigerian election is a significant achievement for our organization. It underscores our commitment to promoting the rule of law and good governance in Africa and beyond. We are confident that Bonyo will continue to make a positive impact on the legal profession and the Africa communities we serve.

I believe that the Commonwealth has an important role to play in promoting democracy and human rights across the globe, and I am proud to have been part of this effort

Linda Bonyo
CEO & Founder, Lawyers Hub



Meta Launches Paid Blue Tick for Facebook, Instagram; Subscription Starts At Ksh.1500 per Month



Facebook and Instagram owner, Meta, will now offer a paid subscription service that allows users to verify their accounts, starting at Ksh.1500 per month. CEO Mark Zuckerberg said the new feature, Meta Verified, is about increasing authenticity and security across the company's services. The service will initially be rolled out in Australia and New Zealand, and only users who are over 18 years old will be allowed to subscribe. The service is not yet available to businesses, and there will be no changes to already verified accounts on Facebook and Instagram.

Elon Musk tried to launch a similar service on Twitter last year, which backfired, leading to the suspension of the effort

before relaunching it in December. Meta is under pressure as it grapples with financial difficulties and faces a wave of redundancies. Moreover, the company is gambling on the metaverse, the world of virtual reality that Zuckerberg believes will be the next frontier online. Investors punished Meta last year, but the company's share price has recovered some ground in 2023. Despite the challenges, Zuckerberg has remained optimistic about Meta's future, and the company recently reported its first annual sales drop since going public in 2012, but the fall was less brutal than expected. Besides, the number of daily users on Facebook hit two billion for the first time.

European Union investment pledge to Kenya.



The European Union (EU) announced on Tuesday that it would increase its investments in Kenya by hundreds of millions of dollars, in a bid to strengthen ties amid competition from China. These deals include a \$200 million commitment from the European Investment Bank to support companies in eastern and southern Africa that have been affected by the war in Ukraine.

The agreements also involve France's Trade Minister Olivier Becht pledging 30 million euros (\$32 million) for the construction of eight sports facilities in Kenya. The EU Ambassador to Kenya, Henriette Geiger, said the new deals are part of the EU's Global Gateway initiative, which seeks to mobilize up to \$340 billion to support public and private infrastructure ventures around the world by 2027.

According to Geiger, the deals will help to unlock untapped potential in Kenya and other African countries. She said that the EU's strategy is a template on how Europe can build more resilient connections with the world to tackle the most pressing global challenges. The move is part of the EU's efforts to counter China's Belt and Road initiative, which funds infrastructure projects in developing countries.

Kenya, an economic powerhouse in East Africa, is seen by the international community as a reliable and stable democracy in a turbulent region. Currently, the EU is the largest export destination for Kenyan products, including flowers, and Kenya's third-largest source of imports. While China has invested in Kenya's infrastructure, the EU hopes to establish more long-term, mutually beneficial economic ties with the country.

France's Trade Minister Olivier Becht, who attended the two-day business forum in the Kenyan capital Nairobi, said that there is a part for every investor who wants to participate in Kenya's economic growth. He added that it is not a competition between French companies or Chinese companies to do more.

The case that would have a significant impact on the future of social media.

The US Supreme Court recently heard oral arguments in the case of *Gonzalez v. Google*, which could have a significant impact on the future of social media platforms worldwide. The case challenges the legal protections that currently shield tech companies from being held liable for harmful content posted on their platforms by their users under Section 230 of the Telecommunications Act.

While this protection is fundamental to free speech online, some argue that it has shielded companies from being responsible for extremist content and disinformation. Debates over Section 230 of the US law have been largely confined to the lower levels of the US federal court system, but recent laws in both Texas and Florida have sought to impose greater restrictions on the way platforms can and cannot police content. The outcome of *Gonzalez v. Google* could decide the future of social media platforms and the internet as a whole.

African Development Bank partners with African Hidden Champions to support the growth of African companies

The African Development Bank (AfDB) announced its partnership with African Hidden Champions (AHC) in a bid to promote the growth of African companies and transform them into global champions. AHC, a joint venture between Africa Foresight Group and the German Investment Corporation DEG, identifies African firms that are involved in building capacity for global leadership in their sector.

The partnership will enable the initiative to expand into new sectors and markets within Africa, and provide more benefits and assistance to AHC members. The AfDB will contribute \$390,000 to support the growth journey of the identified firms, and assist them in telling their stories, exposing them to new markets and networks, and providing technical assistance.

African Hidden Champions has become a leading international platform for showcasing and connecting Africa's most promising companies. The initiative held its inaugural summit outside Frankfurt, Germany, where executives and founders from the first cohort of African Hidden Champions met to discuss how Africa's fastest-growing and most inspiring companies could forge a path to global success.

CEO of DEG, Roland Siller, noted that African Hidden Champions are setting new standards for business excellence



on the continent with their remarkable achievements and unwavering commitment to growth. He expressed his excitement in collaborating with the AfDB to expand the Africa Hidden Champions initiative and empower more companies to realize their potential and transform the African business landscape.

AHC CEO and Co-Founder, Yasmin Kumi, spoke of the initiative's future transformative impact on Africa's private sector, stating that it is time to change the narrative on African

business and expose how big multinational companies are growing from within Africa. She emphasized the importance of challenging peers in global markets, and in doing so, bolstering Africans' pride in their homegrown businesses.

The partnership between the AfDB and African Hidden Champions will support the development of African businesses, enhance their growth potential, and transform them into global leaders in their respective sectors.

Sakaja's new physical address system.

Nairobi Governor Johnson Sakaja has launched a new physical address system that will help identify buildings and locations for city residents. The system involves naming streets and numbering the properties located on them with a numerical property identifier and street name. The physical address system will be integrated with Google Maps, making navigation and delivery easier.



It will also be implemented in informal settlements in Nairobi County, where the county will use names of roads and issue new names to streets in some places. The system will enable the county government to plan and provide amenities for city residents, improve disaster relief programmes, and integrated security. The physical address system has already been initiated, starting with the already known streets in Nairobi's Central Business District. This launch makes Nairobi the second city in East Africa to implement the physical address system after Kigali in Rwanda.

Fingo Africa Receives CBK Approval to Launch Digital-Only Banking Services in Kenya.

Fingo Africa, a neobank startup, has been granted regulatory approval by the Central Bank of Kenya (CBK) to introduce digital-only banking services in Kenya. The neobank aims to offer convenient and accessible digital banking services such as account opening, deposit and withdrawal transactions, balance inquiries, bank statement requests, and financial record tracking. Fingo has partnered with Ecobank, the largest footprint bank in Africa, to gain market access to Ecobank's 33+ markets. Fingo and Ecobank plan to roll out their digital banking services across Africa starting in Kenya, where they are the first digital-only bank in the country. Fingo Africa's exclusive digital services will eliminate the need for paperwork and make banking more convenient, particularly for young people who have traditionally struggled to access financial services in Africa. According to Fingo, the process of opening an account in Kenya typically takes between 48 hours and two weeks, with multiple in-person interactions and the need for physical paper documents. Fingo's digital-only banking services will simplify traditional banking and attract more young people into the banking system. The neobank raised significant seed capital valued at over \$10 million (KES 1 billion) during its Y-Combinator program.



Kenya's business outlook is dim, monthly survey shows.

The latest monthly survey by Stanbic Bank, a member of the Standard Bank of South Africa, has shown a decline in business conditions in Kenya for the first time in six months. This has led to renewed fears of job cuts as households and businesses cut spending over rising inflation, taxation and exchange rate fears. Businesses recorded declines in both output and new sales orders, leading to renewed cuts in employment and spending. While job losses were only mild overall, they were the strongest seen since April 2021. According to the survey, sharp falls in sales came amid reports that cost-of-living pressures and cash flow problems had stunted customer spending. The cost of living has been steadily increasing, which has put pressure on consumers' pockets. Kenya's overall inflation for the month of February rose to 9.2 percent from nine percent in January sustained by rising food and fuel prices. The shilling exchange rate hit a fresh low of Ksh127 against the dollar. Data from

the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics shows that the cost of housing, water, electricity, cooking gas and fuel increased by an average of 0.4 percent between January and February while prices of most vegetables including cabbage, carrots, kale (Sukuma wiki) and tomatoes during the period under review. Currency weakness and reports of increased tax burdens fed through to a sharper rise in input costs, and one that was among the fastest seen since 2014.

While some firms passed these costs on to customers, the rate of charge inflation was broadly unchanged from January and much softer than that of input prices, according to the survey. Customers cut spending due to high inflation and a lack of money in circulation. Kenyan traders have been demonstrating in Nairobi, demanding protection for their business against unhealthy competition from Chinese traders.

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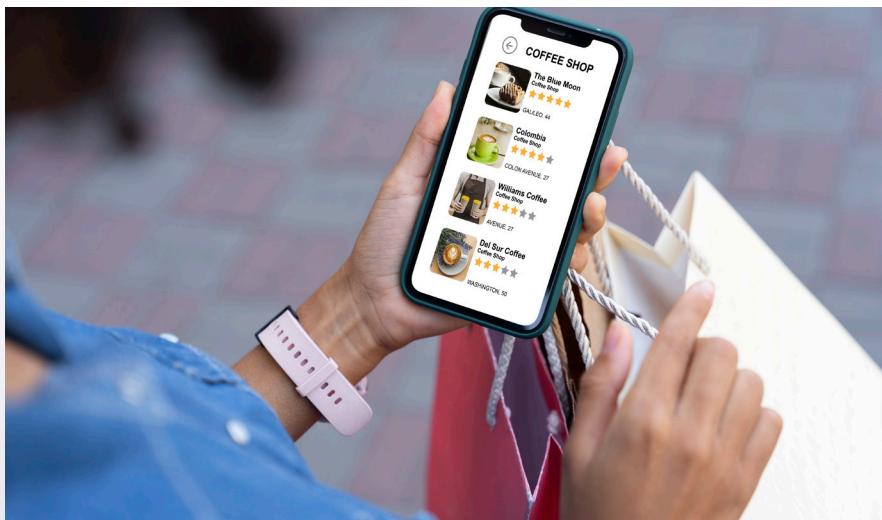
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We are excited to invite you to a unique opportunity to contribute to the conversation around the future of digital trade in Africa. The digital landscape is rapidly changing, and it is important that we have a thorough understanding of its potential impact on Africa's economy, trade and legal framework. The past two years have seen an unprecedented shift towards ACovid-19 pandemic. This has led to an acceleration of digital transformation across all sectors of the economy, including the legal industry. With the increasing reliance on digital platforms and the rise of e-commerce, the legal framework needs to adapt and ensure that it meets the needs of the digital age.

Therefore, the Africa Law-tech festival aims to bring together legal experts and stakeholders from various sectors to discuss the implications of digital trade on Africa's economy, trade and legal framework. We will also examine the opportunities and challenges that arise from digital trade, and how best to address them.

This forum provides a unique opportunity for you to contribute to the conversation around the future of digital trade in Africa. We believe that your participation will greatly enrich the discussions and contribute to the development of a robust legal framework for digital trade in Africa.



The need for a Startup Act in South Africa.

South Africa's startup investment scene has taken a massive 78% dip from the previous year, despite having a tech startup ecosystem worth its weight in gold, a strong economy, a bustling private sector, top-notch education, and high internet usage. Other African countries like Tunisia, Senegal, and Ghana are catching up and climbing the funding ladder. In response, some experts are suggesting that a Startup Act might be the playbook South Africa needs. Tunisia's venture capital influx has ballooned, thanks to its Startup Act implemented five years ago, which saw the country receive \$26 million in 2021 from just \$5 million in 2017.

Experts believe a Startup Act could offer tax breaks, employment flexibility, special skills visas, and exemptions from procurement limitations to help startups thrive. South Africa's unfriendly visa requirements and exchange controls have been putting a damper on business growth, and the government needs to tweak existing laws to give startups a boost or introduce a Startup Act to give the country's investment scene a much-needed legal makeover.

Kenya's competition Authority investigations into online food delivery.

Kenya's Competition Authority has launched an investigation into the operations of online food delivery and groceries platforms across the country. The study aims to identify players and services involved in the food delivery and groceries platforms and to examine the relationships between online food delivery platforms and their users. The inquiry will assess the role of data in operating multi-sided online platforms, customer acquisition, retention, data portability, e-payment services and

their importance in relation to the food delivery and groceries platforms business model. The findings of the inquiry will guide better policymaking and seek to address challenges that consumers face while using online food delivery platforms. This inquiry's opening is expected to streamline the sector and impose penalties for online food delivery platforms violating consumer rights in their operations. job creation and economic growth in the electric mobility sector.

Sasol To Invest \$53 Million In Greentech.

Sasol, a South African energy and chemicals company, has created Sasol Ventures, a €50 million (\$53 million) venture capital fund aimed at driving its decarbonisation and 2050 net zero goals. The fund will invest in start-up and early-stage technologies that will help Sasol offer sustainable chemicals and energy solutions for decarbonising its business, communities and global markets. The company said the funds will be distributed over five years, making it the largest chemicals and industry venture capital fund in South Africa. Sasol has partnered with Emerald Technology Ventures, a global venture capital firm, to help Sasol Ventures source and evaluate investment opportunities. The new initiative is intended to complement Sasol's existing research and technology capabilities.

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Safaricom sued over KES 305 billion Fuliza.

FULIZA

Safaricom, Vodafone Group, and two government agencies have been sued for KES 305 billion by three Kenyan M-Pesa users over the Fuliza overdraft facility. The plaintiffs are accusing Safaricom of fraudulent misrepresentation and material non-disclosure of facts related to the risk assessment audit of the M-Pesa Service. They claim that the Fuliza overdraft service, which allows M-Pesa users to complete transactions even when they don't have enough funds in their accounts, is engaged in banking and financial business illegally.

The lawsuit also alleges that Safaricom and other associated defendants invested M-Pesa account holders' funds illegally and unlawfully, and that the trust account into which money was collected by M-Pesa agents was a 'sham trust'. The Central Bank of Kenya and the Communications Authority of Kenya are also named as defendants in the lawsuit. The plaintiffs seek a declaration that the Communications Authority of Kenya violated its statutory duty to ensure full compliance with its functions pertaining to the provision of telecommunication services and the regulation of electronic transactions.



Why passport processing delays in Kenya.

The Directorate of Immigration Services in Kenya has addressed concerns about delays in the processing of passports for urgent travel. In a statement released on Thursday, March 2, 2023 the department noted that some applicants had failed to attach the required documents, causing the passport printing process to stall or some applications to be rejected outright. The department urged applicants to attach documents that demonstrate the urgency of their travel. Applicants who were yet to receive their passports and had urgent travel plans were advised to track the passport processing by contacting the department on the phone.

The passport application process usually takes between four to six weeks once the applicant's photo and fingerprints have been taken. However, an increase in passport applications due to the migration to digital passports has led to longer waiting periods. In November 2022, the Interior Cabinet Secretary revealed that one of the machines used in printing passports had broken down, further slowing down the passport processing. Consequently, the Department of Immigration wrote to the Treasury asking for Ksh150 million to purchase a new machine while the government began the process of fixing the broken-down machine.

Safaricom phone tracking to arrest bank ATM fraud.

Safaricom has developed an "ATM Vicinity Check" technology to reduce banking fraud by ensuring cash withdrawals can only be made if the transacting customer is within the vicinity of the ATM. The solution, which will be offered to commercial banks for free, works by tying ATM transactions to the account owner's physical location through comparing the geographical location of the ATM and the customer requesting a withdrawal based on the location of the cell phone mast serving the customer. The technology is aimed at preventing fraudulent activities, such as cloning ATM

cards, trapping the cards at the machines, collecting information on the cards, and withdrawing cash from a victim's account using M-Pesa. By rejecting transactions when both the customer and ATM are not in the same location, it makes it harder for fraudsters to carry out their schemes.

At least six banks have signed up for Safaricom's SIM-Swap-Check solution, which gives lenders an API to query when a customer's SIM card was last swapped, enabling banks to decide on the likelihood of a customer's transaction being fraudulent and the additional steps to be undertaken.



JUMIA 

Jumia liable for faulty products.


Jumia, the e-commerce unicorn, has been hit with an unfavorable ruling by the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) this week. COMESA, which regulates regional trade in sub-Saharan Africa, has ruled that Jumia will be held liable for any disputes arising from faulty products purchased from third parties on its marketplace.

Jumia, while filing its initial public offering (IPO) in 2019, had limited control over the products sold on its platform by third parties, some of which may be fake or harmful. At the time, Jumia had announced its return policy as its solution for disputes related to counterfeit or faulty products.

However, Jumia will now have to do more than just pay for returns. It will have to verify the information provided by sellers on its platform and disclose its legal information to customers, allowing them to sue the company. In a statement, COMESA expressed concern that Jumia was dissociating itself from transactions even though consumers deal directly with Jumia, which receives orders, payments, and delivers products on behalf of the sellers.

This is not the first time a ruling like this has been made against an e-commerce platform. In 2020, Amazon was held responsible for damages caused by faulty products purchased from third-party sellers on its website in the Bolger v Amazon case. Despite Amazon's claim that it was merely an intermediary between sellers and buyers, the court ruled that marketplaces have a vicarious responsibility to verify sellers who use their platforms.

The ruling against Jumia highlights the need for e-commerce platforms to take more responsibility for the products sold on their websites. It remains to be seen how Jumia will handle this new legal responsibility and what impact it will have on the company's future operations



Safaricom Introduces New API for Banks to Verify Customer SIM Ownership and Prevent Fraudulent SIM Swaps

Safaricom, Kenya's leading telecommunications provider, has launched a new API that allows banks to verify SIM card ownership of their customers. The API aims to prevent cases of illegal SIM swaps, which have led to customers losing access to their bank accounts and money.

The process is simple: when a customer loses their phone or SIM card, a thief can swap the SIM card and gain access to the customer's bank account through SMS codes sent to the new phone number. To prevent this, Safaricom will provide banks with a free monthly quota to check potential SIM swaps before authenticating transactions. Banks can also purchase additional checks through a premium tier.

The API aims to help banks make better decisions by reducing the reports of customers losing their cash to fraudulent SIM swappers. Additionally, Safaricom is introducing the

ATM Vicinity Check, a service that ensures customers withdrawing cash from an ATM are in the same location as the ATM. The service will be provided at no cost, although the implementation details are yet to be disclosed. Last year, Safaricom introduced a way for customers to block SIM swaps at agents' shops, requiring them to visit a Safaricom Shop. However, this new solution will be exclusive to banks, and it is still unclear how it will be implemented. The potential challenges include lazy banks that may cancel all transactions when the API has issues, and bad players who may access the tool and create bigger fraud problems.

The issue of fraud with SIMs, phones, and bank accounts is a global one, and it will be interesting to see what solutions are developed and implemented. However, as technology advances, fraud also advances, and it is crucial to stay vigilant and cautious.

Tanzania joins Kenya, Rwanda in Africa50 shareholding

Tanzania has joined Africa50, a Pan-African infrastructural financier, becoming the fourth country in the East African region to do so. The move will expand Africa50's pool of investors to 34 and give it access to more capital for its projects. Tanzania's Finance and Planning Minister, Mwigulu Nchemba, signed the share subscription agreement in Morocco on Tuesday, making Dar the 34th shareholder of the institution.

The institution is owned by 31 African countries, the African Development Bank,

the Central Bank of West African States, and Morocco's central bank. Africa50 has financed 16 infrastructural projects worth about \$5 billion since its formation in 2012, and invests in all African countries. In the region, it has invested in three projects in Kenya and one in Rwanda. As a shareholder of Africa50, Tanzania will contribute to the committed capital used to facilitate the platform's investment projects and share in its yields.