

Akamai expected to host servers in Vanuatu

By Jonas Cullwick

AKAMAI TECHNOLOGIES, Inc. a content delivery network (CDN) and cloud services provider headquartered in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in the United States will be one of other internet delivery networks that are expected to operate servers from Vanuatu in the next few weeks, according to Acting Chief Government Information Officer, Jackson Miaka.

Miaka was speaking in an interview with Kizzy Kalsakan on 96 Buzz FM in the lead up to the ICT Days 2016 celebrations that ended at the National Convention Centre in Port Vila Wednesday.

He started by detailing the list of developments achieved in Vanuatu since the arrival of the submarine cable in Port Vila in 2014.

"We have achieved a few developments, namely access to more bandwidth by users. You may have noticed a more improved quality of internet since 2014.

"After the arrival of the cable, almost all of our operators have now connected to high speed internet from that we have had an increase in internet



Acting Chief Government Information Officer Jackson Miaka in front of the TRR banner at the ICT Days 2016 celebration at the National Convention Center

uptake by customer," he says. "Also you may recall we've had a discussion on Vanuatu having an internet exchange point that has now been working for the past two years and has been very successful.

"Since then we've also had Google sent in a case server which has been sitting here in Port Vila and is serving most of our Google content. That's Youtube videos and a whole bunch of other Google services now hosted here locally in Vanuatu."

He says that in the next few weeks the country will be expecting a few more

services from a large content distribution network called Akamai which will be sending a few more servers to be hosted here in Port Vila.

"Again, by having those two servers here in Vanuatu, they will also improve the quality of internet for our users," he explains.

In terms of pricing, the Acting Chief Government Information Officer says that pricing will continue to drop as demand for services continue to grow and also as the government works towards achieving universal access policy goal of connecting 98% of the population to telecom

services by 2018. "So far since 2014 I think things are looking good, and the whole business community for your keenness interest in using internet and telecom services.

"In terms of telecommunication coverage things were looking really well prior to Cyclone Pam in 2015, unfortunately after Tropical Cyclone Pam a lot of infrastructure was damaged both for private operators as well as for the government as it slowed down much of the work that was supposed to be done.

"I'd say that since the cable arrived, we've seen around 2% increase, and that's taken us to around 93% of the population that are currently covered by telecom service and that may include voice and data, which is internet basically.

"However, internet update is slow, mainly because of infrastructure and other associated obstacles such as electricity out in the rural areas where a lot of sites still run on generators and solar. However, internet penetration has also increased a fair bit up to around 21% as we speak."

Miaka admits that in centres such as Port Vila internet is still slow. He explained that the issue was mainly with domestic connections, which despite the fact that the country has the submarine cable landing in Port Vila, our distribution around Efate also up on Santo and other islands is still reliant on wireless equipment.

"This again depends on a whole lot of factors, but is still quite slow and that is something we are working on to ensure we have technologies such as 4G or LTE, which are already in Vanuatu at the moment and there are a few operators who have deployed these services and are widely available to users."

Miaka explains that one of the goals of having universal internet access in the country is through government providing internet to schools and tablets to students. The

first phase of this program ended in April and the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer with stakeholders will start phase 2 shortly.

"We may be looking at connecting up to 25 schools to the internet and also giving out tablets to students.

"From our experience with schools where we've distributed these services, there's as always great excitement by students and also teachers and also there's improved marks in exams from students concerned, which is quite optimistic and we are hopeful to cover the 98% by 2018."

In terms of e-government, quite a bit of progress mainly having the infrastructure, which has been up since 2007 has been done and the next phase of this particular project is deploying applications - software and applications to take more government services out to the people outside of government offices.

"For instance, we'd like to see developments in areas such as weather for instance, people will soon be able to access information regarding weather on their mobile phones or information relating to agriculture for instance, fishers, prices of products and so on which farmers can now access those online so that they are more informed of how they can find potential markets for instance," the Acting CGIO says.