In Brief

Forecast. Multichoice warns of full-year loss

MultiChoice Group, Africa's biggest pay-TV company, expects to swing to a headline loss this year, hurt by foreign exchange losses and a charge on a stake disposal at its South African business. MultiChoice, a spin-off from e-commerce giant Naspers, expects to post a headline loss of between 324 cents and 390 cents ($0.2638) per share for the year to March 31, compared with 410 cents for the previous year. However, the company said core headline earnings and trading profit would rise eight per cent to 12 per cent, driven by subscriber growth and reduced losses in its business in the rest of Africa. **[Reuters]**

Innovation. Platform seeks global impact

Student social action platform Enactus Kenya is changing its approach to developing the county's future innovation leaders. Director James Shikwati (pictured) said the platform will now seek to align its activities to national goals and global trends for greater impact. Mr Shikwati said the model is set to be tested during the upcoming Enactus Kenya National Expo set for this Friday in Nairobi. Up to 21 university teams will take part. **[Moses Omusolo]**

Counter-productive. Current situation has been blamed for illegal trade of commodity despite increasing uptake

Refilling your cooking gas cylinder set to get harder

New regulations ending the convenience of buying LPG at any outlet regardless of the brand will kick in in two weeks.

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You will soon no longer have the convenience of buying cooking gas at your neighbourhood kiosk or the nearest petrol station.

You will instead only refill at outlets run by oil marketing companies that own the brand of your gas cylinder.

This is as new rules abolishing an exchange pool created in 2009 that enabled consumers to trade their gas cylinders at any outlet without regard to the brand of their cylinder kick in in the next two weeks.

The regulations, which were aimed at easing access of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG), had the unintended consequence of increasing illegal trade of the commodity.

This saw industry players lobby for their scrapping.

While the new rules are bound to greatly inconvenience consumers, they will, on the other hand, enhance user safety as they squarely place the responsibility of ensuring gas cylinders are safe on the LPG marketers.

This means the marketers will be directly answerable for accidents caused by gas leaks, including compensation to victims.

"The current regulations had not been clear as to who owns the cylinder between the user and the marketing companies. The new regulations are clear that the brand owners are the owners of the cylinders and if there is an accident, the owner will take responsibility," said Pavel Oimeke, director-general Energy and Petroleum Regulatory Authority (EPRA) yesterday.

He spoke during the launch of a campaign to sensitise industry players on the new regulations organised by the Petroleum Institute of East Africa in Nairobi.

Consequently, the current mandatory cylinder pool exchange made up of 50 marketers will be disbanded.

The companies will have a leeway to create voluntary exchanges, which will, however, need the Competition Authority of Kenya's approval to prevent a few firms forming an exchange that would lock out competitors. Mr Oimeke said the unified valve will, however, still be in use, allowing households a degree of flexibility in choosing cylinder brands.

An Energy and Petroleum Regulatory Authority official inspects gas cylinders at an illegal filling outlet at Changamwe in Mombasa in December 2015. LPG marketers say they have lost control of their cylinders to counterfeiters. [File, Standard]

While acquiring cylinders, Oimeke said consumers will pay a refundable deposit and they can always return the cylinder back to the owner and get the fee back.

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>
> **Pavel Oimeke, director-general Energy and Petroleum Regulatory Authority**

Consumers might, however, end with the short end of the stick as the prices of gas cylinders are not standardised, and the new rules are silent on the refund.

LPG marketers say they lost control of their cylinders when the regulations were scrapped in 2009.

"The vast majority of branded cylinders were never being returned to their original branded owners. Instead, the empty cylinder would move into a parallel market, be illegally refilled and returned back to retailers for sale again," said Petroleum Institute of East Africa Chairman Olagoke Aluko.