Kenya suspends crypto project Worldcoin over safety concerns

By Humphrey Malalo   3 Aug 2023

Kenya's interior ministry said on Wednesday, 2 August, that it had suspended the local activities of cryptocurrency project Worldcoin while government agencies assess potential risks to public safety.

Source: Reuters.

The project founded by OpenAI chief executive officer Sam Altman launched last week. It requires users to give their iris scans in exchange for a digital ID, and in some countries users also get free cryptocurrency as part of plans to create a new "identity and financial network".

"Relevant security, financial services and data-protection agencies have commenced enquiries and investigations to establish the authenticity and legality of the aforesaid activities," interior minister Kithure Kindiki said in a statement.

Worldcoin did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Kindiki said the government was concerned with Worldcoin's activities, and agencies would probe how it intends to use the data it gathers. He said action would be taken against anyone who engages with its activities, without elaborating.

Local media have reported that more than 350,000 Kenyans had signed up for Worldcoin as of Tuesday, in exchange for free cryptocurrency tokens worth around 7,000 Kenyan shillings ($49.09).

Since its launch, people around the world including in Kenya, Germany, Spain and France have been flocking to registration sites to get their eyes scanned by a shiny spherical "orb".

The project has also come under scrutiny in Britain, Germany and France.

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