

For information
on 11 December 2000

Legislative Council Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting

The Administration of Internet Domain Names in Hong Kong

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the background and latest development on the administration of Internet domain names in Hong Kong.

Background

2. On 13 March 2000, we briefed Members of the Information Technology and Broadcasting Panel on the existing arrangements in respect of the administration and assignment of Internet domain names in Hong Kong. Members were also informed that a Task Force had been set up under the Information Infrastructure Advisory Committee (IIAC)¹ to review the administration and assignment of Internet domain names and Internet protocol addresses in Hong Kong, with a view to recommending a framework of arrangements which best suited the needs of Hong Kong. The terms of reference and composition of the Task Force are at Annexes A and B respectively.

3. The Task Force completed the review in May 2000 and subsequently submitted a list of proposals to the IIAC. Following IIAC's endorsement of these proposals, a consultation paper was issued on 5 June 2000 to invite comments from the public. The consultation

¹ The IIAC was established in August 1998 to advise Government on the ways and means to promote the development of Hong Kong into a leading digital city. It is chaired by the Secretary for Information Technology and Broadcasting, with members drawn from a wide cross-section of the industry, business community and the academic field.

paper covered issues in respect of the proposed institutional arrangements for the administration of Internet domain names and Internet protocol addresses in Hong Kong, registration policy and dispute resolution for ".hk" domain names. On 12 June 2000, we briefed Members of this Panel on the details of the public consultation exercise and sought Members' views. The consultation period ended on 16 July 2000.

Results of the public consultation

4. The public generally support that the Joint Universities Computer Centre (JUCC), the current administrator of ".hk" domain names, should gradually transfer the Internet domain names administration function to a new non-profit making and non-statutory corporation for it to assume the overall responsibility for Internet domain name administration in Hong Kong. The public also support the adoption of a more flexible domain name registration policy, aiming at promoting e-commerce in Hong Kong. New measures, including accepting registration of multiple domain names, allowing transfer of domain names on valid grounds, and creating a new second level domain category under ".hk" to enable registration by individuals, etc. should be adopted. Moreover, the public also support the establishment of an alternative dispute resolution mechanism to facilitate early resolution of domain name disputes without the need to resort to court settlement.

5. The IIAC endorsed the results of the public consultation at its meeting held on 24 July 2000 and a media briefing was held on 31 July 2000 to announce the results of the public consultation. A summary of the recommendations endorsed by the IIAC is at Annex C.

Latest development

6. Following the announcement of public consultation results, the JUCC was requested by the Administration to -

- (a) set up a provisional body under it with wide representation from the universities, industry, Government, Internet users and other concerned parties to take forward the transfer of JUCC's administrative functions for Internet domain names to the proposed new corporation; and
- (b) take action to facilitate early implementation of the measures proposed in the consultation exercise on the registration and administration of Internet domain names.

7. As the implementation of the new organisation proposal and the new registration policies will require extra equipment and manpower resources, the Government has undertaken to provide a one-off grant of \$3 million to enable the JUCC to set up the proposed new corporation as early as possible, with a view to promoting the Internet development and e-commerce in Hong Kong.

8. The JUCC will establish a provisional board for the new corporation in early December 2000. The provisional board is initially under the auspices of the JUCC and its composition is set out in Annex D. According to the latest plan, it is envisaged that the provisional board will appoint the dispute resolution service provider(s) in early 2001 and the proposed new registration policies will be implemented by mid-2001. It is also anticipated that the provisional board will be transformed into the new corporation, with its directors elected from its members, within a year's time.

Chinese domain names

9. During the consultation exercise, the public also expressed interest in the development of Chinese domain names. We also note that there has been some development in this area recently. Despite the existence of commercial "test-bed" solutions in the market, it should be noted that the operation of Chinese domain names, or multi-lingual domain names in a broader sense, is still at an experimental stage and an internationally acceptable standard is yet to be developed for adoption. Based on the current schedule, a technical standard on multi-lingual

domain names, now being developed in the international forum, will not emerge until late 2001. The provisional board and the new corporation established to assume the overall administration of Internet domain names in Hong Kong should keep in view the latest development. It should also consider whether and when a test-bed should be rolled out for Chinese domain names ending with ".香港" and/or ".hk".

10. We shall continue to keep Members informed of the latest development on the above issues.

**Information Technology and Broadcasting Bureau
December 2000**

**Task Force on the Review on Administration and Assignment of
Internet Domain Names and Internet Protocol Addresses
in Hong Kong**

Terms of Reference

- (a) to review the existing policy and arrangements related to the administration of the country-code top level domain (ccTLD) of Hong Kong, i.e. .hk;
- (b) to review the existing policy and arrangements related to the administration of Internet protocol addresses used by the community of Hong Kong;
- (c) to review the existing system and procedures for assigning and managing Internet domain names and Internet protocol addresses in Hong Kong; and
- (d) to make recommendations on how the existing arrangements and procedures can be improved to the best advantage of the Hong Kong community having regard to international and regional developments.

**Task Force on the Review on Administration and Assignment of
Internet Domain Names and Internet Protocol Addresses
in Hong Kong**

Membership List

Chairman

Professor Charles Kao

Deputy Chairman

Mrs Jessie Ting (up to 24 April 2000)

Mr Alan Siu (from 25 April 2000)

Deputy Secretary for Information Technology and Broadcasting

Members

Professor Francis Chin,
Professor, Department of Computer Science, HKU

Dr N Ng,
Director, the Joint Universities Computer Centre

Mr Cheng Che-hoo,
Chairman, the Hong Kong Network Information Centre

Mr Charles Mok,
Chairman, the Internet Service Providers Association

Mr Adrian Watt,
Member, the Internet Service Providers Association

Mr Victor Hung,
Chief Trade Practices Officer, the Consumer Council

Dr Y S Cheung,
Assistant Director for Operations, the Hong Kong General Chamber of
Commerce

Mr Joseph Yu,
Committee Member, the Chinese General Chamber of Commerce

Mr Anthony Au,
President, the Hong Kong Information Technology Federation

Mr Simon Chan,
Chairman, the Hong Kong Telecommunications Users Group

Mr K H Lau,
Director of Information Technology Services

Mr Lawrence Kwan,
Chief Telecommunications Engineer, Office of the Telecommunications
Authority

Mr Peter Cheung,
Deputy Director of Intellectual Property

Secretary

Mr Victor Lam,
Senior Systems Manager, Information Technology Services Department

**Summary of Recommendations Endorsed by the
Information Infrastructure Advisory Committee on
Administration and Assignment of Internet Domain Names
and Internet Protocol Addresses in Hong Kong**

Function relating to the overall administration of Internet domain names

- A non-profit making and non-statutory corporation should be set up to assume the overall responsibility for Internet domain name administration in Hong Kong.
- The corporation should operate on a self-financing basis.
- The corporation should be spun off from the JUCC initially, with a provisional board comprising directors from the academia, the industry and the Government.
- The corporation should gradually transform into a membership-based organisation with its directors elected from its members.
- The authority of the corporation should be formalised through some form of "endorsement" from the Government, e.g. an agreement with the Government.

Function relating to administration of IP addresses

- The new corporation responsible for domain names administration should be involved in issues concerning IP address allocation.

Registry and registrar functions

- The existing arrangements for a single domain name registry in Hong Kong, with duties assigned by the corporation responsible for .hk domain name administration, should continue.

- The Government should take over the registrar responsibility in respect of the .gov.hk domain.
- The JUCC should continue to provide registration services in respect of the .edu.hk domain.
- The existing practice of having a single registrar for domain names ending with .com.hk, .org.hk and .net.hk should continue.
- The registrar responsible for .com.hk, .org.hk and .net.hk domain names may engage agents to perform some of the routine registration work.

Registration principles

- The second-level domain category being selected for a particular domain name application should correspond to the business nature of the applicant.
- Domain names should be registered on a "first come, first served" basis.
- The domain name applicant should declare, when making an application, that to its best knowledge, the domain name applied for does not infringe upon the intellectual property rights of a third party.
- Each organisation should be allowed to register more than one domain name under .hk.
- The transfer of domain names on valid grounds should be allowed.
- Only companies and organisations registered or incorporated in Hong Kong should be allowed to register domain names ending with .hk initially.
- Each individual resident of Hong Kong should be allowed to register one domain name in a new second level domain category under .hk.
- Domain names should be subject to renewal at a fee.

Alternative dispute resolution arrangements

- The body responsible for .hk domain name administration should maintain a neutral role in the handling of disputes arising from the registration or use of domain names ending with .hk.
- An alternative dispute resolution mechanism should be developed in Hong Kong to facilitate early resolution of .hk domain name disputes.

Others

- The new corporation should closely monitor the latest development on Chinese domain names.

**Provisional Board on the Administration and Assignment
of Internet Domain Names and Internet Protocol Addresses
in Hong Kong**

Chairman: Chairman of the JUCC Board

Members: One representative each from the Computer Centres of the eight tertiary institutions funded by the University Grants Committee

One representative from the Hong Kong Internet Service Providers Association

One representative from the Hong Kong Information Technology Federation

One representative from the Hong Kong Computer Society

One representative from the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce

One representative from the Chinese General Chamber of Commerce

One legal professional

One representative from the Consumer Council

One representative from the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region