

For consideration
on 12 March 2001

Legislative Council Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting

The Administration of Internet Domain Names in Hong Kong

Purpose

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

Background

2. On 13 March 2000, we briefed Members on the existing arrangements in respect of the administration and assignment of Internet domain names in Hong Kong. Members were 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.

3. The Task Force completed its 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 paper covered issues in respect of the proposed institutional arrangements for the administration of Internet domain names and Internet protocol addresses in Hong Kong, and the registration policy and dispute resolution mechanism for ".hk" domain names. On 12 June 2000, we sought Members' views on the consultation paper. The consultation period ended on 16 July 2000.

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.

4. On 11 December 2000, we briefed Members on the results of the public consultation. In summary, 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 which will 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 so as to obviate the need to resort to court settlement.

5. At the same meeting, we also informed Members that a provisional board for the proposed new corporation to be set up under the auspices of the JUCC in December 2000. The composition of the provisional board is at the Annex. As the establishment of the new corporation and the implementation of the new registration policies require extra facilities, equipment and manpower resources, the Government made a one-off grant of \$3 million in December 2000 to enable the JUCC to set up the proposed new corporation as early as possible, with a view to modernising the Internet domain name registration regime and promoting Internet and e-commerce development in Hong Kong.

6. The provisional board was established in December 2000. It was anticipated that the proposed new registration policies and dispute resolution mechanism would be implemented in 2001 and the provisional body would be transformed into the proposed new corporation, with directors elected from its members, by end 2001.

Latest development

7. The provisional board has met three times since December 2000. It has discussed a number of issues, including the details of the proposed new registration policies, the fee schedule, the alternative dispute resolution mechanism, system development and migration, and the set up of the new corporation. While these issues are still being examined by the provisional board, we set out below the latest progress.

8. As regards the alternative dispute resolution mechanism, the provisional board has invited major arbitration and mediation service providers in Hong Kong to submit proposals to provide dispute resolution service. The Hong Kong International Arbitration Centre (HKIAC) has indicated its interest in providing the service and has made a submission to the provisional board. The proposal is now being considered.

9. On the proposed new registration policies, the provisional board has agreed to adopt a more flexible domain name registration policy as supported in the public consultation exercise, which include accepting registration of multiple domain names, allowing transfer of domain names, creating a new second level domain category under ".hk" to enable registration by individuals, etc.

10. In respect of domain name registration fee, the provisional board considers that this should follow the international practice, i.e. an annual fee should be charged. However, the fee level should be reasonable and comparable to the present rate.

11. The JUCC has also set up a dedicated team to work on the transfer arrangements. The team reports to the provisional board on its work. The provisional board has also set up a working group to deal with specifically the set up of the proposed new corporation, including its constitution, membership, board of directors, etc.

12. It is expected that the proposed new registration policies and dispute resolution mechanism will be implemented in mid-2001 and the proposed new corporation will be set up by end 2001.

13. We shall continue to keep Members informed of the progress.

Information Technology and Broadcasting Bureau
March 2001

**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 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