



HKITF Comment on the Accountability System for Principal Officials

1. The Hong Kong Information Technology Federation (HKITF) in principle supports the proposed accountability system for principal officials. We believe that reform for the existing system of governance is necessary, due to the changing attributes and values of our society and expectations of the citizens and the various sectors of society.
2. However, we are disappointed and deeply concerned about the removal of the Information Technology and Broadcasting Bureau (ITBB) as a policy bureau under the proposed structure of the Government, and the integration of its functions under the new Economic Development Bureau (EDB).
3. In the first Policy Address of the Chief Executive back in October 1997, information technology (IT) was identified as a major thrust of Hong Kong's development efforts. In April 1998, the SAR Government announced the formation of the ITBB to plan and implement Hong Kong's IT development and policy direction. In fact, we would like to note that the formation of ITBB was a result of more than 20 years of intense and consistent lobbying by the IT industry. The removal of ITBB in 2002 will be a gigantic step backward for Hong Kong's IT and high technology development, both in practical terms and also in the image projected domestically and internationally. In fact, we are deeply concerned about the message that the removal of ITBB will relay internationally, and the negative impact on the overall image for the technology sector of Hong Kong. Domestically, this is also counter to the Government's call to develop Hong Kong as a knowledge-based economy.
4. The Federation would confirm the value and importance of ITBB for our industry, in its short four years of existence. Unlike before ITBB's formation, the IT industry and Hong Kong as a whole have seen a more focused IT development strategies, industry support planning, and better and more consistent execution of those policies. Its untimely removal would not do justice to the accomplishment of the bureau and its people. To name a few examples:
 - ITBB moved quickly after its formation to enact the Electronic Transaction Ordinance
 - Better overall coordination of IT policies under the two iterations of *Digital 21* initiatives
 - Significant development in e-Government, well-recognized internationally



Hong Kong Information Technology Federation

- Firm stance by the Office of Telecommunications Authority (OFTA) in completely liberalizing the telecom industry
 - Increased outsourcing and better management of IT applications by the Government, through the work of the Information Technology Services Department (ITSD)
5. The justification by the Chief Executive, as explained by the Government in its Paper to the Legislative Council on April 17 2002 – that “Economic Services and Information Technology have been placed under the portfolio of the same Director of Bureau, because both areas cover important economic infrastructure underpinning the growth of the Hong Kong economy” – is extremely lame. Obviously there are other policy areas that also underpin our economy, that were not placed under the new EDB.
6. As a counter proposal, the Federation recommends that ITBB be retained as an individual policy bureau, but at the same time incorporates the function of the Innovation and Technology Commission (ITC) from the Commerce and Industry Bureau (CIB). The new ITBB may then become the Technology Development Bureau. This integration is necessary to streamline the current situation of IT and other innovation and technology policies being separated under the jurisdiction of two bureaus, which in fact would not be addressed by the EDB proposal either. As an example, we now have the inconvenience of certain key initiative by the Government, like the development of the IC design industry that was highlighted by the Financial Secretary in his last budget speech, is now under the jurisdiction of ITC (and hence CIB) and not ITBB, even though academically as well as practically this is more related to IT than other industry sectors. Also as a result of the integration of ITC in to ITBB (or Technology Development Bureau), we can also achieve better streamlining of policy and execution for our various key infrastructure development projects, including the Cyberport, Science Park, and the Applied Science and Technology Research Institute (ASTRI).
7. However, in the event of the ultimate decision to indeed integrate ITBB to be under EDB, the Federation strongly calls for the retention of a Permanent Secretary, directly reporting to the Secretary for Economic Development. The Permanent Secretary for IT will then retain the current policy and execution areas of ITBB, and also other areas that involves high technology industry development that are appropriate to be placed also under his or her direction. Also, as an important matter of protecting the proper image for the IT industry, we also recommend the retention of either the word(s) “Information,” “Technology” or “Information Technology” in the complete name for the new Bureau – for instance, Economic and Technology Development



Hong Kong Information Technology Federation

Bureau.

8. Moreover, in order to improve the execution of IT policies, strategies and execution, and fostering a strong role for the IT industry, the Federation suggests a strengthening of the present advisory committee structure of the IT industry, escalating the role and responsibility of the present Information Infrastructure Advisory Committee (IIAC) to be more proactively involved with the Secretary and the related Permanent Secretary on policy development and its execution, in a similar way as Singapore's Infocomm Development Authority (IDA).
9. The Federation calls for the Government to more proactively engaged in dialogue with the IT industry on this important change for the governance and development support for our industry, that will certainly continue to be one of the cornerstones of Hong Kong's development as a knowledge-based economy and a business center for China, the region and the world. The Federation, as the representative body for the overall information technology industry in Hong Kong, would welcome the Government's further consultation with our industry, and will pledge our support in coordinating with members of our Federation and the industry as a whole.

The Council

Hong Kong Information Technology Federation

May 15, 2002

About HKITF

The HKITF was founded in 1980 to provide a forum in which the normally competitive IT Vendor companies in Hong Kong could work together to improve the industry and to maintain a high level of business practice amongst its members. Over the years HKITF has developed into a dynamic organization which now comprises all of the major hardware and software vendors together with many of the IT related service, training, systems integration and consultancy companies. HKITF is a not-for-profit and non-political organization, which functions under the direction of an elected Executive Council. The HKITF also counts a number of important industry forums as our affiliate organizations, including the Hong Kong Internet Service Providers Association (HKISPA) and the



Hong Kong Information Technology Federation

Open Software Forum (OSF).

Newspaper: HONG KONG ECONOMIC JOURNAL (信報)

Date: 3 / May / 2002

殺局不如組高新科技

1997年10月，特首董建華於首份施政報告宣布重點發展資訊科技。1998年4月，港府宣布成立資訊科技及廣播局，作為發展資訊科技的決策局，並把電訊和廣播媒體的監管機關，歸於資料局轄下。

事實上，資料局的成立，是資訊科技業界不少前輩二十多年來努力推動和游說的成果。資料局成立後，有關資訊科技產業的決策和施政，雖然不能說是十全十美，但確實改善了不少。即使長遠資訊科技產業發展路向並未有定出策略性方案，但在不少政策執行方面，始終有甚佳的成績。例如決策局成立後，快速地立法確認電子交易合法性，屬下電訊管理局抓緊全面開放電訊的目標，和資訊科技服務器具體支持和增加外判服務等，這些都是對資訊科技產業和香港整體經濟有具體益處的。

所以，當董特首的高官問責制出台時，我們發現資料局竟連「殺局」，將成為新經濟發展局的一部分時，真的令人感到非常意外。如果這使人誤會資料局的存在，在這短短四年中表現不如理想，故遭劃上句號，這是不公平的。事實上，在新決策局的布局中，除了人力資源和環境兩政策範圍被「撤局」，和一些非常接近的政策局被「合併」（如財經事務和庫務、房屋和規劃地政）外，資料局是唯一完全被併掉，連名字都失了蹤。這令人覺得，有可能是特首爲了所有十一個新局長進入行政會議，需要削減現有政策局數目下的一個取捨。

特首推介這新的安排時，只說：「經濟事務和資訊科技撥歸同一位局長的決策範疇，是因為兩者涉及重要的經濟基礎建設，對香港的經濟發展至關重要。」就這麼簡單？難怪不少意見都以為，新的安排主要是爲了遷就所有局長進入行政局，故需要有些犧牲，但除了這考慮外，在局的職能和運作方面，似乎欠缺周詳思量，當然事前也沒有諮詢業界意見，甚至事後反應。特首近日提及就業問題時，仍屢屢提及知識型經濟，但如果給香港內外一個資訊科技重要性被「降級」的感覺，實在不啻，亦傳遞一個錯誤的訊息。

事實上，如果香港的資訊科技產業決策和施政要更暢順，可能應把工商局屬下的創新科技署的職能與資料局結合，把資訊科技擴闊為高新科技，令現在的創新科技署管理的創新科技基金，能更緊密地配合資訊及高新科技產業發展，而且創新科技署管理的科學園和應用科技研究所的工作範圍，明顯與資訊科技不能分割，所以兩者的結合，

可令一些香港有意重點開發的項目，如集成電路設計，毋須再出現與其他資訊科技發展，分於兩個不同的決策局的奇怪現象。

如果資訊科技能在新的政治任命部長制下，繼續獨立運作，這當然最好，但如果真的要歸入經濟發展局內，筆者認為起碼應有幾項事情要考慮。首先，目前的資料局長，必須在新的局內保持一個常任秘書長的位置。另外，資料局下現設的資訊基礎諮詢委員會的諮詢架構，可利用這重組的機會加強職責，從諮詢的角色發展至更具策略和行動功能的角色，如新加坡的訊息通訊局（IDA）一樣，這項重組，可考慮如何與創新科技署職能配合。

其實，港府需要向資訊科技業界解釋新的布局對產業發展的影響，也應聽一聽業界的意見和憂慮。還有，假使新經濟發展局事在必行，爲了重視資訊經濟產業和形象，最佳辦法是把資訊或科技一詞，放回新局的名稱之內。

莫乃光

可圈可點