

For discussion
on 12 June 2000

Legislative Council Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting

Public Consultation on the Administration and Assignment of Internet Domain Names and Internet Protocol Addresses in Hong Kong

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the public consultation exercise being conducted on the administration and assignment of Internet domain names and Internet protocol (IP) addresses in Hong Kong.

Background

2. On 13 March 2000, we briefed Members on the existing arrangements on 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 IP addresses in Hong Kong, with a view to recommending a framework of arrangements which best suits Hong Kong's needs.

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 paper covers issues in respect of the proposed institutional arrangements for the administration of Internet domain names and IP addresses in Hong Kong, registration policy for .hk domain names, and dispute resolution for .hk domain names. A copy of the consultation paper is at

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, businesses and academia.

Annex A . The framework of the consultation paper and a summary of its major recommendations are set out in the following paragraphs.

Framework and summary of major recommendations

4. The first part of the consultation paper (paragraphs 2 – 18) provides background information about the existing local arrangements and international practices on the administration and assignment of Internet domain names and IP addresses, including the latest developments under the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN)² and the different modes of operation in the network information centres of eight surveyed economies³. It also sets out the current position on registration in respect of Chinese domain names.

5. Paragraphs 19 – 33 of the consultation paper set out the proposed institutional arrangements on Internet domain names and IP addresses in Hong Kong. Basically, the Task Force is of the view that a new policy-making and administrative body, in the form of 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 membership of the body should be open on a subscription basis to Internet Service Providers, the commercial sector, academia, the Government as well as other organisations and individuals with an interest in the development of the Internet. The new body should be gradually transformed from the Joint Universities Computer Centre (JUCC)⁴ and some form of “endorsement” from the Government, such as an agreement between the Government and the corporation, should be made to formalise the authority of the body. As for the domain name registry⁵ function, the Task Force is of the view that the existing

² ICANN is a non-profit-making, global organisation independent of governments established to take over, by September 2000, the responsibility for IP address allocation, protocol parameter management, domain name system management and root server system management currently undertaken by the Internet Assigned Numbers Authority under a contract with the United States Government.

³ In conducting the review, the Task Force has made reference to the practices of eight other economies. They are Australia, Singapore, Japan, the United Kingdom, the Mainland of China, Taiwan, Canada and Finland.

⁴ The JUCC is jointly run by the computer centres of the eight tertiary institutions funded by the University Grants Committee in Hong Kong. Currently, it is the registration authority of .hk domain names.

⁵ The current registry is operated by the Computer Services Centre of the Chinese University of Hong Kong as delegated by the JUCC. It also acts as the sole registrar of .hk domain names.

arrangement of a single registry should remain unchanged. In respect of registrars, the Government should take over the registrar responsibility of the “.gov.hk” domain and the JUCC could continue with the registrar responsibility of the “.edu.hk” domain, whereas the registrar responsible for “.com.hk”, “.org.hk” and “.net.hk” domain names may engage agents to perform some of the routine registration work. As for the administration and assignment of IP addresses, the Task Force is of the view that the existing arrangements are smooth and should remain unchanged.

6. Paragraphs 34 – 49 of the consultation paper set out the principles on domain name registration and dispute resolution for consideration by the proposed policy-making and administrative body. In summary, the Task Force is of the view that each local organisation could apply for more than one domain name, domain names ending with .hk should in principle be transferable on valid grounds, and registration by individuals should be allowed, whereas domain name registration by overseas companies without a local presence should be considered at a later stage. To balance the above measures against cybersquatting, the Task Force is of the view that a reserved list of well-known international marks may be drawn up by making reference to similar lists maintained by overseas network information centres. To strengthen the administrative measures on dispute resolution, the Task Force is of the view that while the policy making and administrative body should maintain a neutral role in case of disputes, an alternative dispute resolution mechanism, similar to that adopted by the ICANN for the generic top-level domains, could be adopted. To sustain the on-going operation of the new policy-making and administrative body, the Task Force is of the view that renewal fees of domain names should be charged. This arrangement is in line with international practices.

Consultation

7. The consultation paper has been put on the "Digital 21" web site as well as the web sites of the Government Information Centre, the Information Technology and Broadcasting Bureau and the Information Technology Services Department. Comments have also been specifically invited from a number of organisations (as set out in Annex B) which have an interest in the subject. Printed copies of the

consultation paper can also be obtained at the District Offices of the Home Affairs Department. The consultation period will last for six weeks until 16 July 2000. Results of the public consultation will be reported to the IIAC so as to determine the way forward.

Advice Sought

8. Members are invited to comment on the Consultation Paper.

**Information Technology and Broadcasting Bureau
June 2000**

**List of organisations invited to comment on the
administration and assignment of Internet domain names and
Internet protocol addresses in Hong Kong**

1. The Chinese General Chamber of Commerce
2. The Chinese Manufacturers' Association of Hong Kong
3. The Chinese University of Hong Kong
4. The City University of Hong Kong
5. The Consumer Council
6. The Federation of Hong Kong Industries
7. The Hong Kong Article Numbering Association
8. The Hong Kong Baptist University
9. The Hong Kong Chamber of Small and Medium Business
10. The Hong Kong Computer Society
11. The Hong Kong Federation of Educational Workers
12. The Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce
13. The Hong Kong Information Technology Federation
14. The Hong Kong Information Technology Joint Council
15. The Hong Kong Institute of Education
16. The Hong Kong Institution of Engineers
17. The Hong Kong Intellectual Property Society
18. The Hong Kong Internet Service Providers Association
19. The Hong Kong Network Information Centre
20. The Hong Kong Polytechnic University
21. The Hong Kong Productivity Council
22. The Hong Kong Professional Teacher's Union
23. The Hong Kong Small and Medium Business Association
24. The Hong Kong Telecommunications User Group
25. The Hong Kong Trade Development Council
26. The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology
27. The Hong Kong Web Hosting Association
28. The Hong Kong Web Symposium Consortium
29. The Information and Software Industry Association
30. The Joint Universities Computer Centre
31. The Law Society of Hong Kong
32. The Lingnan College
33. The Open University of Hong Kong
34. The University of Hong Kong
35. The Vocational Training Council
36. The Webmasters (Hong Kong) Association