

Press Releases of February 2005

■ [Press Release issued by the Commerce, Industry and Technology Bureau \(CITB\) on 24 February 2005 - Government to Take "Steps" against Spamming](#)

Press Release issued by the Commerce, Industry and Technology Bureau (CITB) on 24 February 2005 Government to Take "Steps" against Spamming

The Government would take a number of measures including launching a campaign entitled "STEPS" to fight Hong Kong's spam epidemic, the Secretary for Commerce, Industry and Technology, Mr John Tsang, said today (February 24).

Speaking during a luncheon meeting organised by six information and communication technology organisations, Mr Tsang said spamming was a problem that had affected almost everyone in Hong Kong.

"The fixed telecommunications network service operators in Hong Kong received more than 36,000 junk fax complaints in 2004. A survey conducted by the Hong Kong Internet Service Providers Association found that spam had risen to account for around 60% of all emails, with individual members experiencing as much as 90% of their emails being spam," Mr Tsang said.

Drawing on the views expressed to an earlier consultation and the trend on recent developments, the Government will launch the "STEPS" campaign to contain the problem of spamming.

The first letter "S" stands for strengthening existing regulatory measures. In conjunction with relevant industry associations and service providers, the Government will start work in two areas - fax and SMS and MMS.

For fax, the Government will work closely with fixed telecommunications network service providers to penalise advertisers who continue to spam recipients on the "not-to-call" list by reducing the timeframe required to cut off their access to telecommunications services, which is their means to send out fax advertisements.

For SMS and MMS, the Government plans to work with the industry to extend the existing code of practice for mobile network operators to cover all SMS and MMS unsolicited promotional messages, including those sent by the operators themselves.

The second letter "T" stands for technical solutions. The Government will collaborate with the industry to organise seminars, conferences and exhibitions to promote the latest anti-spam technical solutions to all users.

The third letter "E" stands for education. "In the fight against spam it is vital that

the recipients play their part in denying the spammers by not purchasing anything marketed through spam or, better still, not responding to spam at all.

"To this end, we will work with industry organisations to develop an information campaign on spam to raise the level of awareness and provide accurate information and useful resources to consumers," Mr Tsang said.

The fourth letter "P" stands for partnerships. Mr Tsang highlighted that one possible partnership was the development of a common blacklist to filter spam at the local Internet service provider level.

"We will work with industry organisations to facilitate the process and liaise with relevant authorities to ensure that the sharing of information in developing and maintaining the common blacklists complies with relevant laws, such as the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance," he said.

On global partnership, Mr Tsang revealed that the Commerce, Industry and Technology Bureau would soon become one of the Founding Signatories of a Multilateral Memorandum of Understanding on Co-operation in Countering Spam.

"This MoU will facilitate co-operation among Asia-Pacific signatories on many fronts in tackling the spam problem. We will continue to develop international partnerships and play a leading role in the fight against spam," he said.

The last letter "S" stands for statutory measures. Mr Tsang said that the Government believed it would be necessary to enact legislation to regulate spamming.

"Such a piece of legislation would prevent Hong Kong from becoming a safe haven sheltering illicit spammers. It would also facilitate co-operation with overseas jurisdictions with similar legislation in investigation and enforcement work against spammers.

"We have an open mind on the exact form and content of the legislation, but the key is to strike the right balance between the need to discourage spamming and to enable legitimate e-marketing activities to develop properly.

"Our aim is to work out a legislative framework which is largely acceptable to different stakeholders before we proceed to draft the legislation. We will engage representative stakeholder groups over the next few months for detailed and pragmatic discussions. We intend to introduce the full draft legislation into the Legislative Council some time next year," Mr Tsang said.

Ends/Thursday, February 24, 2005