



HONG KONG INTERNET FORUM

香港互聯網論壇

Our Ref: 09/CT/0119

By email and Fax: 2185 7845

31 Mar 2009

LC Paper No. CB(1)1233/08-09(01)
(English version only)

Hon Andrew LEUNG Kwan-yuen, SBS, JP
Chairman of the Information Technology and Broadcasting Panel
Legislative Council
Email: panel_itb@legco.gov.hk

Dear Honorable Mr. Leung,

Comments on the Review of the Administration of Internet Domain Names in Hong Kong

In June 2007, HKIF (Hong Kong Internet Forum) submitted comments in response to the public consultation by the HKSARG on the review of the administration of Internet domain names in Hong Kong (our ref 07/CT/0312). Although most of our suggestions had not been adopted, we have been monitoring with interest the development so far.

Below are our comments in relation to the paper CB(1)1191/08-09(07)

1. Appointed Directors

In paragraph 7 on Appointed Directors, the Government has listed 4 areas of expertise which the 4 appointees are supposed to have – one of them is “experience in the business of administration of Internet domain names”. However when we approached the practitioners in the domain name industry, both local and overseas, such as ISPs and ICANN (Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers), none of the 4 appointees are known to them as having the relevant knowledge and experience. Strange that the Government can make this claim in their progress report, unless there are other criteria which we are not aware?

More interestingly, it is known that one of the 4 appointees has virtually no understanding of IT, Internet or even email, while another had rarely attended meetings in person when he/she was a director of HKIRC. Did the Government do any screening on qualifications and past performance when they appointed such directors?

We believe the process of selecting appointed directors is not transparent at all. The process, the relevant correspondences and records, should be disclosed for the sake of public interest. For example, it has been reported that one of the appointed directors suddenly declined to be appointed right at the beginning of the new term – Why did that happen? Why was she appointed in the first place?

2. Formation of the Consultative and Advisory Panel

In relation to the formation of CAP (Consultative and Advisory Panel) in paragraphs 9 to 13, we see that some progress has being made. However, this apparently has over-shadowed the core tasks of what HKIRC should do. Everything, including promoting ‘.hk’, pricing and the registry/registrar model, has to be put aside pending the establishment of CAP. Indicating acute bureaucracy - as if nothing can be done unless the CAP is established first. We believe that the key decision making body is still the Board, not the CAP. Also, HKIRC is expected to



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provide administrative and secretarial support to the CAP as well as the Board. There is a worry that HKIRC is going to be bogged down with the administrative requirements of these bodies rather than focusing on its core activities.

3. Losing Sight of Priorities

The domain name industry is undergoing some dramatic changes which are viewed as opportunities by some countries or economies in further developing their Internet infrastructure and becoming a leader in future Internet applications. These changes include the introduction of multi-lingual country-code top-level domains and the opening up of the generic top-level domain space. It is a real pity to see that HKIRC is totally bogged down with governance and institutional matters since early 2007, and may be so for the rest of 2009. This is no good news for the local Internet users, and even worse for Hong Kong people as a whole.

All in all we believe the review and implementation of new institutional arrangements are important, but not to the extent that core initiatives like promotion of '.hk', pricing review and registry/registrar model have all to be put on hold subject to the formation of the CAP. There are also imperfections in the process to appoint directors which the Government should address with the view of clarifying such to the people of Hong Kong.

Last but not least, we would like to thank the HKSAR Government and the current HKIRC Board members for their foresight and efforts in making Hong Kong the internet hub of Asia. An open and accountable HKIRC is the only way forward in order to maximize the benefits and opportunities to the entire Hong Kong community. On this basis we do urge Panel Members and the Government to review our comments positively and if we can be of further assistance please do not hesitate to revert back to us.

Yours sincerely

Christopher To
Chairman, Hong Kong Internet Forum (HKIF)

About HKIF

Hong Kong Internet Forum ("HKIF") is a non-profit organisation representing the opinions and needs of Internet users in the local community. These opinions and needs are channelled to service providers, vendors, HKSAR Government, local, regional and global organisations and associations to influence their policies and strategies affecting the rights of local Internet users and their families, as well as their quality of life in the real and cyber world. HKIF is an At-large Structure ("ALS") in Asia Pacific accredited by the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers ("ICANN").