

Our Right for Domain Names

By Riyadh Al Balushi

The Times of Oman

Sunday, November 16, 2008 12:04:23 AM Oman Time

MUSCAT — Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (TRA) has published a public consultation paper detailing the new framework for .om domain names.

The .om postfix for domain names identifies an Internet website as one associated with the Sultanate of Oman.

This new proposed framework aims at opening up the .om domain name market, protecting the interests of trademark owners, and creating resolution procedure for domain name disputes.

Even though new framework offers a lot, it makes no mention of Omani individuals' right to register domain names for their personal use, but instead completely restricts the registration to commercial entities, professionals, museums, hospitals, schools, and government agencies.

This is surprising because individuals all over the world are allowed to register domain names for their personal use, and many Omanis have registered generic top-level domain names such as .com and .net for their personal use, but they had to approach international online domain registrars to get this done.

Individuals in Oman are allowed to own real property, postal addresses, mobile phones, and emails, but not domain names.

Omani individuals are legally allowed to and do operate websites in their personal capacity but not under .om domain names.

There is no justification for not letting Omani individuals register .om domain names.

In fact, letting them do it is in public interest because of four main reasons: First of all, allowing Omani individuals to register .om domain names will provide local companies with new business

opportunities.

That does not only go for the actual domain name registration transaction, but also individuals are more likely to use hosting services provided by their domain name registrar.

Secondly, it will provide individuals with greater protection against the misbehaviour of registrars as these will be local companies which can be reached easily when a dispute occurs.

This is much easier than trying to take any action against an international company based in another country.

Thirdly, it will provide authorities with an easier method for taking legal action when an offence is committed online as the domain name will be managed locally and all the details of the domain owner will be held by a local company.

Finally, allowing Omani individuals an easy method for registering domain names will contribute to the increase of local Omani web content on the Internet and that is in the interest of the society as a whole.

There is no doubt that allowing individuals to register .om domain names for their personal use is the right thing to do.

The Internet is not a medium made exclusive for companies to sell us their products, but is a place for all of us to express ourselves and share our knowledge and experience with the rest of the world.