

## Arabic domain names on track

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An official from the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) has said that countries will not have to wait long to utilise a new opportunity allowing them to create domain names in their own languages.

Only nine out of 22 Arab nations have shown interest in creating Arabic domain names. Two of them, the UAE and Saudi Arabia, are at the forefront of efforts to utilise the new opportunity that was announced recently in Seoul.

Baher Esmat, ICANN's regional relations manager for the Middle East, said approval to use non-Latin characters for internet addresses was part of the fast-track implementation of a short-term policy which may run for only two to three years.

Speaking to Gulf News from Cairo, Esmat said the move did not mean that ICANN would, after two or three years, bar the registration of non-Latin domain names in Arabic, Chinese and Hindi characters.

"We are working out a long-term solution to the problem&hellip; a long-term policy in this regard, which will be developed within two to three years," he said.

He added that the long-term policy would govern the registration of non-Latin domain names thereafter.

### Interested nations

An estimated 50 countries were interested in creating non-Latin domain names, according to an ICANN survey carried out last year. Nine of them were Arab nations and these include the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Libya, Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia. From November 16, governments or their nominees can submit requests for specific names, and web users will start seeing them in use early next year.

"We expect more registrations from the UAE and Saudi Arabia as the governments and private sector in those countries are very keen to create Arabic domain names," Esmat said.

As Gulf News reported earlier, the UAE' Telecom Regulatory Authority (TRA) has set its sights on making the UAE's .ae domain name one of the most easily identifiable in the world.

The TRA intends to register 20,000 domain names under the .ae realm by the end of this year, adding onto the 90,000 domain names currently registered there, officials said.

Over the next five years, the TRA plans to make the .ae domain one of the most recognised virtual territories.

dot emarat monopoly

The UAE is expected to apply for 'dot emarat' (.emarat) for Arabic domain names in Arabic as ccTLD (country code top-level domain) in addition to the existing 'dot ae' (.ae) English domain name.

Baher Esmat, ICANN's regional relations manager for the Middle East also revealed that India will be applying for several domain names to accommodate its 22 local languages and 11 scripts.

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