

America wants to be webmaster for world

By Haider Rizvi
Special to Sentinel-Voice
UNITED NATIONS (NNPA) - International efforts to break down the digital barriers facing the world's poor will backfire if governments fail to work out their differences on the issue of Internet governance, diplomatic observers here say.

Many heads of state and technical experts from around the world are scheduled to attend the United Nations Summit for the Information Society in Tunis this week, where, among other things, they will try to negotiate the legal and technical future of the Internet.

But with the United States unwilling to embrace any changes in the network it helped create in the 1960s, and other nations seeking to alter the current system, indications are that negotiators could pack up without a concrete agreement.

The most contentious among the issues to be discussed at the summit is

Washington's role in overseeing the Internet's address structure known as "the domain name system," which enables millions of computer users around the world to communicate with each other.

Currently, the system is managed by the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (Icann), a California-based nonprofit private organization that works under contract to the U.S. Department of Commerce.

Despite certain differences on the issue, both the developing countries bloc led by China, India, Brazil and others, and the European Union, are stressing that the Internet should be governed internationally with multiple stakeholders involved in the decision-making process.

While many developing countries want Internet governance to be controlled by an international body such as the U.N., the Europeans have proposed what they call a "cooperation model" to deal

with Icann. The model points to a "forum" that would allow governments, interested organizations and industry to discuss Internet issues.

But Washington continues to oppose such suggestions, arguing that Internet security and stability are best maintained through the current systems of technical controls overseen by Icann.

"As important as Internet governance discussions are, I don't think anybody believes that as a result of them there will be one more computer or one more cell phone in rural parts of Africa, South America, Asia or anywhere else," said David Gross, who has led the U.S. delegation at the previous U.N. meetings on information technology.

The plan of action adopted at the conclusion of the first U.N. summit on the information society held in Geneva in 2003 laid out clear targets for increasing information and communication technologies access and Internet connections for ur-

al areas, hospitals, libraries and universities in the developing world.

The plan also set targets for online access for local governments, for the availability of content in all languages and for developing primary and secondary school curricula to meet the challenges of the information society.

Developing countries argue that meeting such goals requires changes in Internet governance, but the U.S. says the current system is already producing positive results.

"I think, as I look around the world, that a lot of progress has been made in those areas," Gross says. "But, of course, there is a lot of work still to be done."

While the vast majority of people without access to the Internet live in developing countries, there are also millions of people within the developed world who are unable to use the Web for economic reasons.

At recent U.N. meetings

on information-related issues, diplomats from developing countries have consistently contended that Internet governance must be more transparent and inclusive in order to foster economic and social development.

"Internet governance should not be the prerogative of one group of countries or stockholders, Maria Luiza Viotti, a Brazilian diplomat, told a recent forum at U.N. headquarters in New York. "Governments have a stake, and the concerns of developing countries should be taken into account."

But U.S. officials countered this position on the ground that governments' involvement in Internet governance in certain countries would cause further erosion of the freedom of expression and independent political opinion.

Michael Gallagher, President Bush's Internet adviser, believes that countries seeking changes in Internet governance are seizing on the only "central" part of the system in an effort to exert control.

"They are looking for a handle, thinking that the [domain naming system] is the meaning of life," he says. "But the meaning of life lies within their own borders and the policies that they create here."

The European Union and Canada share many of the U.S. concerns over governments' control.

But at the same time, they also appear to be equally wary of Washington's domi-

nance over Internet governance.

Those closely watching the negotiating process say it is too early to suggest that the summit will prove to be a fiasco, yet there is a possibility that it may conclude without any meaningful agreement signed.

"It would be foolhardy and unrealistic to assume that the U.S. would not continue to play a major role in the future governance of the Internet," writes Irmran Chaudhry, an information technology expert at the George Mason University in Virginia.

"It seems implausible the U.S. would cede any ground to a U.N.-sponsored regulatory body," he goes on to say. "In that sense, it is possible that the current debate may be an exercise in futility, because no matter what ultimate proposals are presented to the Secretary-General Kofi Annan, they will be subject to de facto U.S. veto."

Others fear that such a scenario could lead China, Russia, Brazil and other nations to launch their own versions of the Internet.

"We have to have a platform where leaders of the world can exercise their thoughts about the Internet," Viviane Reding, the European Information Technology Commissioner, told the *Guardian* newspaper.

"If they have the impression that the Internet is dominated by one nation and it does not belong to all the nations, then the result could be that the Internet falls apart."

Your Horoscope Says... Nov. 24-30

ARIES

A secret may be revealed in a casual conversation. Your confidence is valued and appreciated. Take it all in! There's no returning to what has been once you realize the gift you've been given.

Soul Affirmation: Freedom of mind is the greatest gift for me this week.

Lucky Numbers: 11, 17, 28

TAURUS

A friend from the past could suddenly appear in your life. This could be a highly beneficial reunion for both of you. Let bygones be bygones, and renew this friendship. Love isn't used up just because it's shared with many.

Soul Affirmation: Love is my watchword this week.

Lucky Numbers: 6, 7, 10

GEMINI

Drive the speed limit in all things this week or you could wind up with a ticket of some kind. Why rush? Serenity is available if you only stop and listen for it inside of you. Discharge your usual obligations with dignity and count your blessings.

Soul Affirmation: I obey the rules this week and avoid hassles.

Lucky Numbers: 19, 26, 28

CANCER

Slow down and relax your brain-energies! The universe knows how to take care of itself and of you. Give it a chance by getting your mental schemes out of the way. Sometimes it is hard, but trust.

Soul Affirmation: I let my luck work for me.

Lucky Numbers: 11, 18, 29

LEO

Party with a good pal who knows where the most action is. You deserve time out on the town. You'll be glad to be able to celebrate life with this person. Live free and large, and cherish good friends.

Soul Affirmation: My friends are my greatest assets this week.

Lucky Numbers: 7, 19, 27

VIRGO

No need for rowdiness, wild ones. You can make your point without waving your hands and arms about wildly! Speak your wisdom softly, gently this week, so that others can hear it and benefit.

Soul Affirmation: I am the picture of calm this week.

Lucky Numbers: 14, 28, 35

LIBRA

Things speed up again this week, and you are in a highly creative mood. An outspoken female in your circle may illuminate a thorny question for you. You'll be surprised and pleased by what you hear.

Soul Affirmation: My creativity brings joy to my spirit as I move through my week.

Lucky Numbers: 6, 29, 40

SCORPIO

One of your most unique gifts is the power to change your mind. You know how to change the way you think, and it gives you great personal magnetism. This week you may be called upon to change the way you think about another.

Soul Affirmation: I am open; I am willing to change.

Lucky Numbers: 23, 45, 49

SAGITTARIUS

Everybody should be in a good mood this week, and you'll want to join friends or family in sharing food and feelings. You may be asked to change your opinion about something you believe in. Make the change. It will enhance your spiritual growth.

Soul Affirmation: Clinging to the old will inhibit my growth this week.

Lucky Numbers: 6, 20, 29

CAPRICORN

Focus intently on the personal this week. Others may seem scattered or impersonal, but it's not about you. Keep your thoughts and feelings to yourself until others are more receptive to your good vibrations.

Soul Affirmation: I glow from inside and feel the warmth of my own self-esteem.

Lucky Numbers: 19, 30, 40

AQUARIUS

A personal decision is made, and you are happy for the person who makes it. This person may be younger than you, but you've got a karmic bond between you. Enjoy the excitement each moment, and know that faith is being kept by your very actions.

Soul Affirmation: My loyalty is my pledge of faith.

Lucky Numbers: 10, 28, 43

PISCES

Give extra attention to the way you look this week. Your inward self is showing on your exterior. Adorn your exterior with brightness so that your inner self will shine forth. Love yourself with all your heart.

Soul Affirmation: I embrace myself and feel glad.

Lucky Numbers: 29, 48, 49

• PUBLIC NOTICE •

CAT/MAXFAREADJUSTMENTS EFFECTIVE DECEMBER 1

The Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada (RTC) will be implementing its new fare structure for the Citizens Area Transit (CAT), the Metropolitan Area Express (MAX) and The DEUCE transit services starting on December 1, 2005. The following fare adjustments will be made in an effort to improve our transit systems:

- **New Residential CAT/MAX Day Pass is \$2.50 for all Non-Striproutes, (additional \$.50 per ride on Striproutes)**
- **New Residential Reduced Fare CAT/MAX Day Pass is \$1.25 for all Non-Striproutes, (additional \$.50 per ride on Striproutes)**
- **30-day CAT/MAX/DEUCE Pass is \$40.00**
- **30-day Reduced Fare CAT/MAX/DEUCE Pass is \$20.00**
- **Transfers will be eliminated**

The new fare structure was approved by the RTC's Board of Commissioners, following six public meetings and an extended comment period. For more information visit us online at www.catride.com, www.rtcsonthernnevada.com or call 228-RIDE (7433).



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