

Chinese, Russian, Arabic language web addresses coming

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Akram Atallah, president of Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) Generic Domains Division, on April 14, 2011

The first-ever non-Latin language website address domains are on their way, the Internet's overlords said Wednesday.

Online domains in which website addresses would end with words in Chinese, Russian, or Cyrillic have been approved according to the US-based Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN).

"It's happening - the biggest change to the Internet since its inception," said Akram Atallah, president of ICANN's Generic Domains Division.

"In the weeks and months ahead, we will see new domain names coming online from all corners of the world, bringing people, communities and businesses together in ways we never imagined."

Online neighborhoods with addresses ending in the Chinese word for "game;" the Arabic word for "web" or "network," or the Cyrillic words for "cite" and "online," have been cleared and more should quickly follow suit, ICANN said.

"They are all IDNs, scripts that are different from the Latin script, basically," Atallah said.

"One of the goals of the program is to promote choice and diversity in the (top level domain) space."

Top level domains have historically been English language terms such as ".com" or ".gov."

Those cleared to manage new domains must now give companies or organizations with trademark claims the first chance at registering website addresses.

The "sunrise" period should be over in about 60 days and the domains open for anyone to register websites with registrars that essentially act as domain name wholesalers, according to ICANN.

The change naming "greater [top level domains](#)" is expected to expand the number from fewer than two dozen to more than a thousand.

ICANN is considering more than 1,800 requests for new web address

endings, ranging from the general such as ".shop" to the highly specialized like ".motorcycles."

Many of the requests are from large companies such as Apple, Mitsubishi and IBM—with Internet giant Google alone applying for more than 100, including .google, .YouTube, and .lol—Internet slang for "laugh out loud."

California-based ICANN says the huge expansion of the Internet, with some two billion users around the world, half of them in Asia, means new names are essential.

There are currently just 22 gTLDs, of which .com and .net comprise the lion's share of online addresses.

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