

The following is the transcript of the remarks by the Under Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development (USCED), Mr Gregory So, to the media after attending the forum on the review of Control of Obscene and Indecent Articles Ordinance organised by HK Information Technology Federation at HK Productivity Council on November 17 (English portion):

Reporter: What did you hear most about the ISP filtering system?

USCED: First of all, I would like to clarify that the filtering software that the consultation document refers to is merely a choice for the users of the Internet account to see whether they would opt to have the protection of the filtering software. For example, some parents would like to have that filtering for their children. I understand that the existing system is that the ISPs would give them two accounts, one will be filtered and the other will not be filtered. The parents will be using the unfiltered account while they would have the filtered one for their children. In other words, they have the key, whether they want to turn on and off the filtering. In no situation will the Government mandate the users to use a filtering system.

Reporter: The Government is talking about asking ISPs to install filtering software for their users?

USCED: The dominant views we have received so far is that we shall allow the market to decide and will not be mandating the ISPs to provide this service. These are the overwhelming majority of the views we have received so far. This is only the second month of the consultation. But at the end of the consultation, if views expressed are very similar to what I have heard so far, most likely that we would recommend that the market dictating whether there should be such a filtering software.

Reporter: How about the age verification?

USCED: In terms of the age verification, we have looked at different systems elsewhere, overseas examples. Again, the majority of the views we have received so far indicated that this system may not be workable in Hong Kong. Again, by the end of the consultation, if that is the view expressed by the public, we will follow that view.

Reporter: Are these the two biggest changes...?

USCED: We still have quite a few issues involving the Internet that we have to resolve. One would be the definition of what is "public" or "part of the public". That relates to the definition of "publication". We would like to have a clear idea and I think the public should have a clear idea. I think that would be a very important issue.

Reporter: How likely are there changes in the wording of the Ordinance..?

USCED: As I said, this is the second month of the consultation. There is still a lot to be done, still a lot of views that we need to hear. But we can assure that in the next round of consultation, there will be concrete proposals by the Government.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript)

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