

Sunday 19, October 2008

The meeting organized by Tele and AfriNIC banned by Government order

By Asseged Teffera

The meeting arranged by a company called AfriNIC with the permission of the Ethiopian Telecommunications Corporation to take place after a month was banned by government's order. The meeting was banned because of a suspicion that something else will be committed under the cover of the meeting. The company has requested to send its representatives to discuss about the ban.

AfriNIC-9 meeting was going to be organized by AfriNIC at the Sheraton Addis from November 22-28/2008 with the intention to give training and forward support to member countries on the new V6 internet protocol as the former internet protocol version 4 /IPv4/ is about to expire.

Information shows that the order to ban the meeting one month before its scheduled date is given by the minister of transport and communication Ato Junedin Sado.

Written correspondences made with regards to this matter show that AfriNIC which is led by a board formed by countries rendering internet service in Africa was banned from conducting the meeting upon the information provided to people at different levels starting from senior government officials to lower Telecommunication officials that the company has some hidden mission regarding Dot Africa.

Dot Africa is an organization at project level working on domain name space allocation. Dot Africa is one of the five companies assigned by ICANN to carryout similar activities throughout the world. Dot Africa works on Africa.

Various written correspondences especially those sent from various officials to the Ministry of transport and communication state that AfriNIC accomplishes propaganda works and request Tele to stop its relationship with AfriNIC

The concerned bodies providing the information that Dot Africa is needed to be based in Mauritius or South Africa while conducting the service of domain name space allocation also insist that Dot Africa should be based in Ethiopia. They further explain that Ethiopia being the capital of Africa and base to various international institutions should not miss this opportunity.

Ethiopian officials and officials from the Telecommunications who met with AfriNIC at the ITU meeting in Rwanda three months ago said that the country will benefit if the same meeting gets to be conducted in Ethiopia.

Other information sources say that AfriNIC which is based in Mauritius and has its technical work in South Africa is propagating Dot Africa which is said to be on project level should be based in South Africa. The propaganda is needed as the decision will be made by the member countries of the continent's Telecom association. The sources who emphasize that the propaganda requires political and technical work also say that the political work will be accomplished by the government.

AfriNIC has expressed its surprise to the Ministry of transport and communication on the letter dated 14/10/08 It has disclosed that the meeting can not be cancelled and will be held in another country and that it has no idea about the matter to be 'investigated' and requested for an appointment to send its representatives and talk to the concerned bodies. Tele, when asked for explanation, said that the meeting is postponed for indefinite period of time upon the given order.

The corporation mentioned that it has received no request or information regarding Dot Africa and disclosed that AfriNIC has requested for an appointment to send its representatives and talk to the concerned bodies on the letter dated 14/10/08 and the corporation has given due response.

The corporation also disclosed that the state minister for the Ministry of transport and communication has written with regards the meeting on which the corporation has worked for the past 11 months about by establishing a committee that has members from both companies, in order to benefit from the meeting.

With regards to the said hidden mission, the corporation disclosed that it does not know anything other than conducting the meeting and benefiting from the meeting at national level. It was known that the companies who petitioned against AfriNIC took part on the auction held with regards Dot et.

According to Tele Professionals the cancelation of the meeting will disadvantage Ethiopia. Training will be provided before the new internet protocol version 6 (IPv6) comes to effect. Tele will incur a lot of cost if the corporation instead sends professional abroad for training; it is also a fact that the corporation can only afford to send few people for training. An opportunity would have been opened to train 60-110 professionals if the meeting took place in Addis Ababa. Negotiations are underway to this effect.

The professionals also said that the corporation was facilitating conditions to take advantage of the opportunity and train professionals as the new generation networks fully uses internet protocol. They also indicated that Ethiopia will benefit as the internet protocol upgrades to version 6 (IPv6). Furthermore,

policy makers and, officials and professionals of service providers will have the opportunity to participate to regional (continental) meeting where they will be trained in the policy area.

The professionals who saying 'what needs to be investigated should soon be investigated and some mechanism should be sought for the meeting to take place' stressed on the point that banning the meeting without a concrete reason may affect the corporation's future relationship. Dedication for bringing any continental meetings to Ethiopia maintains the good image of the country even more than the benefit achieved from the meeting's direct agenda. It should also not be forgotten that it could be a good financial income.

On the other hand even if the meeting takes place in Ethiopia, as the concerned bodies already disclosed, 'the technical and political work should be started to bring the base of Dot Africa to Ethiopia.