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Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting

Meeting on 11 May 2020

Background brief on Smart Government Innovation Lab

Purpose

This paper provides background information on the Smart Government Innovation Lab ("Smart Lab"). It also summarizes the major views and concerns expressed by Members in previous discussions on the subject.

Background

Smart Government Innovation Lab

2. To tie in with the pro-innovation government procurement policy and facilitate the development of innovation and technology ("I&T"), the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer ("OGCIO"), in promoting "Smart Government", established the Smart Lab in April 2019 to facilitate the industry, in particular local start-ups as well as small and medium enterprises ("SMEs"), to provide bureaux/departments ("B/Ds") with information technology ("IT") solutions that cater to B/Ds' service needs.

3. OGCIO has shared on the thematic website of the Smart Lab the challenges faced by B/Ds in providing various public services, and has invited the industry to submit technical solutions and product suggestions for addressing such challenges. OGCIO has also organized technical forums quarterly in collaboration with Cyberport and the Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation for industry players to share with B/Ds their innovative technologies and solutions as well as success stories, and how such technologies can be applied to improve public services.

4.   Besides, OGCIO arranges proof-of-concept and technical testing in the Smart Lab for suitable solutions to help B/Ds better understand how the solutions can effectively address their business needs and be implemented so as to enable them to draw up procurement requirements more effectively for suitable products and solutions. The Smart Lab also showcases technologies that have been successfully tested by government departments, such as artificial intelligence, virtual reality, geospatial information system technology, etc., with a view to inspiring adoption by more departments.

Applying robotics technologies to enhance public services

5.   As advised by the Administration, one of the key tasks of the Smart Lab for 2020 is to explore in conjunction with various B/Ds the application of robotics technologies (including machine-learning, cognitive systems, intelligent agent, robotic process automation, etc.) to enhance public services. Apart from organizing technology forums and workshops, and inviting the industry to submit suggestions for conducting proof-of-concept and technology testing, the Smart Lab plans to develop practical modules of robotic process automation in order to expedite the introduction of relevant technologies and enhance the operational efficiency of government departments.

6.   According to the Administration, the Smart Lab has organized two technology forums participated by over 130 companies (mostly local start-ups and SMEs). The Smart Lab has also been arranging proof-of-concept trials of different solutions for relevant government departments, including technologies such as anti-bot, intelligent transportation, blockchain, etc. The Smart Lab will continue to strengthen the exchange and collaboration between government departments and the industry, and identify more suitable solutions for testing, thereby creating more business opportunities for local start-ups and SMEs.

Previous discussions

Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting

7.   Issues relating to the implementation of Smart Lab were discussed at the meetings of the Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting ("the Panel") on 16 April and 10 June 2019. The major views and concerns expressed by Panel members are summarized in the ensuing paragraphs.

8.   Panel members noted that OGCIO would arrange proof-of-concept and technical testing in the Smart Lab and showcase technologies that had been successfully tested by government departments. Some members sought details on the smart sensing technology for monitoring tree stability, and asked whether the Administration would install the relevant monitoring system in urban areas particularly at bus stops or in areas with high pedestrian flow to alert the public of trees which were more likely to fall in severe weather. The Administration advised that such sensors would be installed for detecting tree stability and anchorage in high pedestrian flow areas to protect public safety.

9.   Some members asked the Administration to engage the I&T sector to help government departments adopt IT to improve public services, thereby creating more business opportunities for local start-ups. The Administration advised that OGCIO had set up a dedicated webpage setting out the problems facing different public services and inviting interested parties to submit technology solutions and product suggestions. Trials and technology testing for proposals that fulfilled the needs of departments would be arranged in collaboration with relevant departments. Meanwhile, OGCIO had organized technology forums for industry players to share their technology solutions. The first technology forums had been held in June 2019 and would be organized on a quarterly basis in future. The Smart Lab was expected to create more business opportunities for local start-ups and SMEs.

10.   In response to some members' enquiry about the frequency of updating the contents of the Smart Lab, the Administration advised that the contents of the Smart Lab were updated on a half yearly basis.

11.   Some members commented that the Administration should facilitate the industry, especially local start-ups, to support B/Ds in adopting IT to improve public services. Moreover, the Administration should invite industry players such as accelerators to share with B/Ds their technology solutions. Members also requested the Administration to invite Members and the industry to visit the Smart Lab.

12.   The Administration undertook to invite start-ups to put forward proposals on IT applications and product suggestions for various public services. Given than many industry organizations had indicated interest in visiting the Smart Lab, OGCIO would follow up the matter as appropriate.

Finance Committee

13.   In examining the Estimates of Expenditure 2019-2020, Members raised written questions on the manpower involved, operational expenses and

timetable for setting up the Smart Lab, and the selection criteria for the adoption of technology products of the local industry.

Latest position

14.   The Administration will brief the Panel on 11 May 2020 on the progress of Smart Lab in promoting the adoption of I&T products and solutions in public services.

Relevant papers

15.   A list of the relevant papers is set out in the **Appendix**.

Council Business Division 1
Legislative Council Secretariat
6 May 2020

List of relevant papers

Meeting	Date of meeting	Papers
Finance Committee	11 April 2019	Administration's replies to Members initial written questions (Reply Serial Nos. ITB037, ITB077, ITB171, ITB175, ITB192, ITB204 and ITB221)
Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting	16 April 2019	Administration's paper on update on Smart City Development (LC Paper No. CB(1)876/18-19(03)) Updated background brief on smart city development (LC Paper No. CB(1)876/18-19(04)) Minutes of meeting (LC Paper No. CB(1)1269/18-19)
	10 June 2019	Administration's paper on E-Government Services (LC Paper No. CB(1)1135/18-19(03)) Updated background brief on e-Government development (LC Paper No. CB(1)1135/18-19(04)) Minutes of meeting (LC Paper No. CB(1)1327/18-19)