For discussion on
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**Legislative Council Panel
on Information Technology and Broadcasting**

E-government Programme for 2002

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INTRODUCTION

This paper briefs Members on the programme of E-government initiatives that the Information Technology and Broadcasting Bureau (ITBB), together with the Information Technology Services Department (ITSD) and other bureaux and departments, will pursue in 2002.

BACKGROUND

2. In the Digital 21 Strategy Document released in May 2001, we set out five Key Results Areas (KRA) to cement Hong Kong's position as a leader and not a follower in the digitally connected world. In particular, to push forward E-government, we have promulgated a comprehensive E-government strategy.

E-GOVERNMENT PROGRAMME FOR 2002

Enhancing the Environment for E-government Development

3. We briefed Members on 10 December 2001 on the focus of the work of the E-government Coordination Office (EGCO) for the proposed duration of two and a half years, in the context of our institutional arrangements for implementation of the Digital 21 Strategy and E-government initiatives. We will strive to put in place an environment conducive to further E-government development, including embedding business process re-engineering into different stages of the IT project development cycle, speeding up IT project management, facilitating the provision of one-stop and joined-up services to the community and cultivating the culture for cross-departmental collaboration.

4. We will rigorously pursue these in 2002. In particular, we aim to complete a review of the current mechanisms for funding IT projects with a view to promulgating new procedures and guidelines in the coming year to ensure business process re-engineering is properly considered and undertaken during the

planning, implementation and review of IT projects. We will also complete a review of the existing methodologies and guidelines for IT project management to ensure that they are efficient, up-to-date, flexible and result-oriented.

5.   In 2002-03, the Government will be implementing some 400 IT projects in bureaux and departments, with around 350 projects scheduled for completion within the year. These projects are either funded under the Capital Works Reserve Fund Head 710 Computerisation Block Allocation (below HK$10 million each), or by funding sought from the Finance Committee (for projects at or above HK$10 million each). As far as the Block Allocation is concerned, the proposed size of the Allocation will increase by 11% from that of 2001-02. The majority of these projects contribute directly to the provision of e-options, expansion of the Electronic Service Delivery (ESD) Scheme and implementation of major E-government projects, some of which are outlined in the subsequent paragraphs.

6.   With the expanding portfolio of E-government, we will continue our outsourcing policy to make the best use of private sector resources in developing E-government and bring more business opportunities for the IT industry. At the same time, ITSD is assisting bureaux and departments to take business ownership of IT and set up their own IT Management Units (ITMU). ITSD will use its core strengths at the center in ensuring the performance, reliability and scalability of infrastructure facilities across the Government and developing and maintaining an Interoperability Framework and related technical specifications for E-government.

Provision of E-option

7.   We have set an overall target to provide an e-option (the option to obtain service on-line or through other electronic means) for 90 per cent of the public services amenable to the electronic mode of delivery by end-2003. By the third quarter of 2001, over 70% of such services have been provided with e-option, as compared to 65% in May 2001. ITBB will continue to monitor and coordinate the E-government initiatives of individual bureaux and departments in 2002 so as to achieve our target.

Expansion of the ESD Scheme

8.   The ESD Scheme provides a convenient one-stop and customer-oriented platform for bureaux and departments to provide e-options for their services. Since its launch in December 2000, the ESD Scheme has become one of the most popular Government web sites in Hong Kong. As at the end of 2001,

some 21 million visitors have made use of the ESD system and over 1.1 million E-government transactions have been conducted through the site.

9.	With its innovative business model to integrate public and commercial services into one single portal, the ESD Scheme won the first prize of the Stockholm Challenge Award 2001, an international IT-award programme organised annually by the City of Stockholm, under the category of Public Services and Democracy. There were altogether over 740 projects from 90 countries competing for 14 awards under seven categories.

10.	In the past year, the ESD Scheme has made a significant contribution to our E-government development. It now provides more than 110 types of online public services from 40 Government departments and public agencies. In the past few months, we have introduced various popular public services through the Scheme, including the "Statistical Bookstore", "Government Bookstore", online registration to sit for the Test of Advanced Proficiency in Putonghua, electronic payment of Fixed Penalty Tickets and real time video of traffic conditions. In particular, the introduction of online appointment booking for giving of marriage notice, which saves marrying parties from lining up outside marriage registries for giving of marriage notice, has clearly demonstrated how E-government can bring greater convenience to the public.

11.	We will continue to leverage on this innovative portal to introduce more online public services in the months to come. We plan to introduce more interactive functions through the "Statistical Bookstore", booking for leisure and sports facilities and programmes, registration service for more public examinations, sale of public examination publications and online search of cases of bankruptcy and compulsory winding-up of companies. To further enhance the accessibility and reach of electronic public services, we plan to introduce ESD services through the mobile medium in 2002.

Utilisation of E-options

12.	It is also our mission to drive the utilisation of the ESD services and other e-options provided. Members at the ITB Panel meeting on 10 December 2001 also raised the issue of the utilisation of e-options.

13.　　　　According to the Thematic Household Survey Report No. 6 issued by the Census and Statistics Department in November 2001, 32.4% of all persons aged 15 and over in Hong Kong were aware of the ESD Scheme. About 3.9% of those who were aware of the Scheme actually made use of the ESD services and 20.4% of those who have not used the ESD services expressed that they may use the services in the coming 12 months. However, the survey was conducted only 4 to 6 months after the ESD Scheme was launched and it takes time for the public to get used to the new way of obtaining government services.

14.　　　　Regarding the actual level of utilisation of e-options (that is, the electronic usage of a service, as opposed to other "traditional" means), it varies considerably. For some services, the electronic usage is very promising. For example, with the introduction of dedicated computer terminals by the Land Registry, around 80% of all searches of land registers are now conducted through electronic dedicated lines. However, for other services, such as the online filing of tax return and application for renewal of driving/vehicle licence, the take-up rate is not as high as we would wish. We are looking at ways to improve matters. Our experience shows that the variation of the level of utilisation of e-options of different services is due to various factors like the complexity of transactions, availability of alternative convenient channels, user-friendliness of the e-options, frequency of the usage of the service and existence of incentives in using the e-options.

15.　　　　It is very difficult to obtain utilisation rate of e-options in other countries for benchmarking purposes, as the information is mostly kept for internal use. However, an international survey conducted by Taylor Nelson Sofres in the second half of 2001 indicated that Hong Kong tops in Asia and ranks sixth worldwide in the utilisation of online government services. The survey revealed that 31% of the population in Hong Kong has used online government services in the twelve months preceding the survey.

16.　　　　To maximise the benefits of E-government, we will further promote the use of e-options, in particular the ESD Scheme. In 2002, ITBB will study the experiences of other countries in introducing measures/incentives, financial (e.g. rebate, gift/coupon award etc.) and non-financial (e.g. faster processing, introduction of value-added services in connection with the e-options, reduction/closure of manual channels, etc.), and consider the applicability of these measures/incentives to Hong Kong.

Electronic tendering and procurement

17. Electronic procurement is an important initiative in driving the adoption of e-business in the private sector. We have set a target to carry out 80% of Government procurement tenders through electronic means by end-2003.

18. An Electronic Tendering System (ETS) has been in use by the Government Supplies Department since April 2000. As one of the world's first government tendering systems, the ETS allows suppliers from all over the world to receive notification of our tenders, submit tender offers and receive notification of tender awards through the Internet. It was initially introduced to cover non-works tenders below HK$10 million each. In October 2001, we enhanced the System to cover non-works tenders with value exceeding HK$10 million each.

19. Works tenders normally involve voluminous requirements and bulky submissions, and hence involve more complex considerations. The use of electronic means would greatly improve the efficiency of the engineering and works professions in preparing and submitting tender proposals and the Government in subsequent processing. The Government already issues works tenders and receives tender proposals through CD-ROM. The Government also disseminates works tenders through the Internet. In 2002, the Works Bureau will complete a study on the feasibility of submission of works tenders through the Internet.

20. The Government Supplies Department is also considering the development of an Electronic Marketplace System (EMS) for lower value purchases below HK$1.3 million each, which are now conducted through invitation of quotation or direct purchase. EMS will automate the currently manual procurement processes and increase operational efficiency. It will also help drive Government suppliers for these purchases, which are mostly small and medium-sized enterprises, in the adoption of e-business to improve their competitiveness in the Information Age. The Department will implement a trial scheme of using electronic marketplaces operated by the private sector in early 2002 to gain early experience for adopting electronic procurement for lower value purchases, before taking forward the proposal to develop an EMS in 2002. Funding for development of the EMS will be sought separately from the Finance Committee.

21.		In 2002, ITBB will continue to coordinate the various electronic tendering and procurement initiatives with concerned departments to ensure that our target of conducting 80% of Government procurement tenders through electronic means by end-2003 is met and to encourage active utilization of the electronic means by our suppliers.

Introducing a New Dimension of Communication with the Public

22.		The Information Services Department will implement new initiatives to enhance communication between the Government and the public. A revamped Government Information Centre (GIC) website, to be released in the second half of 2002, will provide citizens with a more user friendly, one-stop access to the information and services provided by all bureaux and departments. To use IT to provide a new channel for the Government to communicate interactively with the public, an online news bulletin will also be launched in the second half of 2002. With the launch of the bulletin, we aim to disseminate Government news and information through multi-media in an innovative manner, including interviews with senior officials on major policy issues. Features like e-mail subscriptions, letters-to-editor, etc will be incorporated. This will further improve the transparency of Government and connect the Government and the public more effectively.

23.		We will also develop a "Common Look and Feel" for all Government websites. This will help give all Government websites a consistent brand image, facilitate navigation by the public and strengthen communication between the Government and the public. We hope progressively to introduce the new "Look and Feel" in 2002.

Implementation of Multi-Applications on the Smart ID Card

24.		At the special meeting of the joint Panels of Information Technology and Broadcasting and Security on 20 December 2001, Members were briefed on the implementation of value-added non-immigration applications on the smart ID card which will be introduced in phases from mid-2003 to 2007. These applications, all at the voluntary choice of citizens, include: embedding of a free digital certificate (e-Cert); accessing driving licence-related functions; using as library card; and reserving capacity for electronic purse. In 2002, we will coordinate with relevant bureaux/departments the implementation of these

applications to ensure that the applications are provided to the public in a seamless and customer-oriented manner. We will also enhance the existing public kiosk infrastructure to support the smart ID card functions.

Enhancement of the Accessibility to IT Facilities within Government

25.　　　　We will provide all civil servants with access to computer facilities. Officers with operational need for computer facilities will be provided with dedicated facilities. Currently, there is about one computer every two civil servants. We will roll out a scheme to provide officers currently without access, with computer facilities on a shared basis so that they can gain access to the Government-to-Employee (G2E). This will create an e-enabled environment to facilitate civil servants to conduct more internal businesses electronically. In 2002, we will launch a pilot programme to provide shared computer facilities and staff training to 10 bureaux/departments. At the same time, we will also progressively introduce some G2E services from 2002, including electronic leave application and processing, electronic pay slip, electronic training, etc.

26.　　　　Mobile computing technologies have been developing rapidly and a good selection of handy but powerful mobile computing devices is now available in the market. To try out the potential of using mobile technology in the daily operations of the Government, particularly for off-site operations to enhance the operational efficiency and productivity of the staff, we will roll out a series of pilot projects in selected departments in 2002. ITBB is coordinating with the Management Service Agency and ITSD on the implementation of this initiative.

Exploiting voice recognition technology in the delivery of public services

27.　　　　With developments in the voice recognition technology in recent years, commercial applications are now available in the market to facilitate service delivery. With the excellent fixed line and mobile communication network in Hong Kong, there is potential for applying this technology to improve the delivery of public services. We will implement a pilot scheme in 2002 to provide selected public services using voice recognition technology.

CONCLUSION

28.   E-government is an important area of work for all governments including the Mainland, where some cities seem to have taken a particularly strong initiative (e.g. Shanghai, Nanhai and Foshan).   The above initiatives represent only our currently planned tasks.   If Hong Kong is to maintain its leadership position in E-government, we have to maintain close liaison with our counterparts around the world and introduce, adopt and implement the best practices for the benefit of the community.   With a view to deepening the awareness of the community over our E-government efforts, we are in the course of publishing an E-government booklet to outline our major E-government initiatives.   An advance English copy of the booklet is at Annex for Members' information and comments.

Information Technology and Broadcasting Bureau
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