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Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting

Meeting on 13 May 2008

Background Brief on E-government Programme

Purpose

This paper gives an account of the development of the e-government programme and summarizes Members' concerns on the subject matter from 2006 onwards.

Development of the e-government programme

2.   On 4 May 2001, the Government promulgated "Digital 21" Information Technology (IT) Strategy (the Strategy) to update and revise Hong Kong's IT strategy to keep pace with the changing technological landscape and the global e-business development, so as to develop Hong Kong as a leading digital city in the globally connected world.   One main area focus in the Strategy was to develop e-government to modernize Government operations, enhance efficiency and optimize the use of limited resources, as well as improve the quality of service delivery to the community so as to meet the increasing aspirations and demand in the Information Age.   The Strategy reaffirmed the Government's commitment to lead by example in the adoption of e-business, both in conducting internal operations as well as delivering public services (including access to Government information and the completion of Government transactions) to the community on an "anywhere and anytime" basis.

3.   In the first phase of the e-government programme launched in 2001, the Government put in place a secure and reliable infrastructure and provided an e-option for 90% (or 1 200 services) of the public services amenable to the electronic mode of delivery.   The focus of the first phase of e-government was on "publishing information online" and "enabling e-transactions".

4.   In March 2005, the Administration announced the implementation of the next wave of e-government which focused on "integrating and transforming e-services".   Government bureaux and departments were required to move from a government-centric way to a "whole-of-government" and customer-oriented approach in providing e-services, so as to better meet the specific needs of different customer segments.   In this regard, the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO) was established within the then Commerce, Industry and Technology Bureau (CITB) which sought, among other things, to provide more visible and proactive leadership for the Government to drive the development of e-government.

GovHK

5.   To this end, the Government proposed to launch a One-Stop Access Portal in 2007 (subsequently named as "GovHK") to gradually reprovision the e-government services provided through other platforms, such as the Electronic Service Delivery (ESD) portal and the Government Information Centre[1].   It also planned to adopt a "service clustering approach" for the future delivery of e-government services under which related e-government services would be grouped into a number of clusters to better meet the needs and expectations of citizens by segments.

6.   At its meeting on 3 March 2006, the Finance Committee approved a commitment of $170.8 million for developing GovHK and enhancing the central infrastructure to support the implementation of the new strategy.   Subsequently, GovHK was soft launched on 6 September 2006 for public trial use.   Customer satisfaction survey conducted after the soft launch found that over 80% of the respondents considered the content of GovHK easy to find and understand. Taking into account the feedback from customers and the result of accessibility tests conducted with visually impaired individuals, improvements were made to the GovHK which was officially launched in August 2007.   According to the Administration, about 1 200 Government services have been provided with e-options, and over 95% of the Government forms (about 2 500 forms) are available on the Internet through the Government Forms website (http://www.info.gov.hk/forms/) and/or the departmental websites.

Project governance

7.   The Government has devolved management responsibilities for IT projects to Government bureaux and departments since 2001.   More than 90% of IT projects in the Government are implemented through out-sourcing services. Bureaux and departments are however required to prepare and review their departmental IT plans (DITP)[2] and Information System Strategy plans (ISSP)[2]

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[1]   The Government's services on the ESD*life* portal have been migrated to GovHK after the expiry of the Government's contract with the operator of the ESD Scheme in January 2008.   The Government Information Centre was retired in May 2007.

[2]   A DITP is a medium-term IT Plan for B/Ds with relatively low IT requirements.   It normally covers

according to their business and e-government needs. They are also required to maintain a Departmental IT Projects Portfolio (DITPP)[2] and provide annual update to OGCIO, which is responsible for coordinating the capital funding for all new administrative IT projects, monitoring the progress of project implementation and expenditure, and ensuring the delivery of anticipated benefits on full implementation of these projects.

8. At the meeting of the Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting (ITB Panel) held on 14 May 2007, OGCIO reported that there were 492 on-going projects during the fiscal year 2006-2007 with a total value of about $6,884 million. Of these, 465 were small projects (i.e. block vote projects valued from $150,001 up to $10 million) costing $2,206 million, and 27 were major projects (i.e. those valued more than $10 million each) costing $4,678 million. 49 (or about 10%) of these projects (with a total value of about $3,867 million) were experiencing slippages of which 30 had delays exceeding 6 months. These slippages were attributable to three main causes, namely, procurement management, requirement management and contractor performance management.

9. To enhance project governance, OGCIO had eventually introduced the following strengthening measures:

    (a) project risk profile assessment for early identification of risks relating to the cost, scale and complexity, risks and public relations impact of the project;

    (b) a three-tier governance mechanism for senior officers of OGCIO, as government IT advisors, to participate in the project steering committee of high risk projects based on the result of project risk profile assessment, to review the project organization and progress against major milestones, and to provide management advice on the technical and industrial aspects of the relevant tenders and contracts for the projects, where applicable; and

    (c) a regular report mechanism for OGCIO to monitor the status of all projects on a quarterly basis and to require bureaux and departments to report progress more frequently to OGCIO for timely advice on problematic projects, i.e. those experiencing significant delays in achieving the major milestones.

Members' views and concern

10. The ITB Panel received regular reports from the Administration on the

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    a period of one to three years. An ISSP is a long-term, strategic IT plan for B/Ds with a relatively wide variety of services or high service volumes. It normally covers a period of five years or more. A DITPP provides a more detailed portfolio of B/D's IT initiatives that are in operation, being implemented and being planned in current and subsequent years.

implementation of the e-government programme. Panel members generally supported the development of e-government in Hong Kong. Nevertheless, they raised the following concerns at Panel and Council meetings.

IT competence and readiness of bureaux and departments

11.   Noting that there were slippages in major projects, Members had doubt about the IT knowledge of the middle-aged managerial civil servants and their ability to manage and monitor large scale IT projects. The Administration's explanation was that most of the slippages in major projects were due to complex business requirements and business transformation requiring a major change in the way the department conducted its business. Nevertheless, the Civil Service Training and Development Institute of the Civil Service Bureau and OGCIO had been providing training programmes, seminars, experience sharing sessions and conferences to equip staff with knowledge and skill on the use of IT, as well as to broaden their awareness on pertinent issues such as IT security and new technology trends and applications.

12.   Members observed that Government bureaux and departments that were experienced in computerization and the integration of e-government into their overall operation model were more ready to go further towards automation and electronic solutions, while those that had little or no experience in IT development and application were dragging their feet. Moreover, with the setting up of the Information Technology Management Unit (ITMU) within bureaux and departments and the Government's policy of devolving management responsibilities for IT projects to bureaux and departments, those departments in need of automation might be further impeded by the lack of management and technical know-how to embark on IT initiatives. Members therefore urged that strategies and measures be put in place to systematically and specifically assist these bureaux and departments to catch up on e-government initiatives.

13.   The Administration assured Members that while about 60 departments had so far set up ITMUs to provide direct advice and support to the lines of business of bureaux and departments, OGCIO would provide central services and advice. Nevertheless, a consultancy study had been commissioned in late 2007 to examine how best the integration of e-government and adoption of e-business solutions in bureaux and departments could be encouraged and facilitated.

Provision of e-services

E-procurement

14.   On the implementation of pilot e-procurement programme conducted at OGCIO, the Immigration Department and the Environmental Protection Department, Members suggested that e-invoice be considered for the pilot programme to drive supplier adoption. Members also requested the Administration to assess and apprise the Panel of the increase in percentage, if

any, of SME suppliers having Internet connection as a result of the implementation of e-Procurement, and SMEs' response to and their degree of participation in the e-Procurement programme.   The Administration should also assess the actual benefits of the pilot programme and the extent to which green procurement was adopted.

15.   According to the Administration, the scope for the pilot programme encompassing four e-Procurement initiatives (namely Procurement Portal, e-Catalogue, e-Sourcing and internal workflow system) with a commitment of $49.2 million was a prudent and pragmatic way to proceed.   Nevertheless, the Administration would keep in view opportunities for trying out the e-invoice function when circumstances was conducive and would assess the actual benefits of the e-Procurement pilot programme at the review stage.

Smart Identity (ID) Card and the GovHK Portal

16.   Noting that the rollout of the Smart ID Card in 2003 had brought about a number of improved services such as the digital-certificates for online transactions, library card functions and particularly the automated passenger/vehicle clearance at border control points, etc., Members opined that the full potential of the Smart ID Card had yet to be realized.   Although data storage capacity had been reserved in the chip for the development of other applications, so far only a handful of departments had made use of the card face data stored in the chip for other applications.

17.   On Members' suggestion of engraving driving licence data on the smart ID card, the Administration's stance was that it was not appropriate to include driving licence in the smart ID card as there might be difficulty for the public and overseas authorities to access the data in the chip.   Moreover, there would be a need to re-issue smart ID cards with no driving licence data engraved on the card face to persons whose driving licence were temporarily suspended. Nevertheless, the driving licence data had now been stored in the backend computer system for law enforcement agencies to access the data directly for traffic enforcement.   The Transport Department and the Department of Justice were exploring the legal implications and the legislative amendments involved to take forward the proposal of providing smart ID card holders with an option of not carrying driving licence while driving.   As the scope and details of the legislative amendments involved were very extensive and complex, a timetable for the completion of the study could not be drawn up for the time being.

18.   Members held the view that whether or not to put in more personal data in the chip of the Smart ID Card was a sensitive and controversial issue.   As such, they reminded the Administration to conduct comprehensive community-wide consultation and discuss with the Panel on any changes on personal data and privacy policies.

19.   On the inception of GovHK, Members called on the Administration to further enhance the data search and query functions of the portal with a view to improving accessibility and its user-friendliness.

E-forms

20.   Noting that about 95% of the Government forms were available on the Internet through the Government Forms website and/or departmental websites, Members were keen to ensure that the remaining forms would be down-loadable from the Internet shortly.   In this connection, they requested the Government to set a date for all Government forms to be posted onto the Internet.

21.   According to the Administration, bureaux and departments were encouraged to make forms available online wherever feasible. While only a small percentage of forms was not currently accessible through the Internet, they were mainly those that were issued by departments to specific applicants/companies for operational reasons, mostly with pre-filled personal/company data, saleable forms that were not normally used by the general public, and forms related to statutory declarations. The Administration would strive to overcome existing legal, procedural or business related problems so as to further improve beyond the 95% rate and expedite the uploading of Government forms onto the Internet.

Relevant papers

22.   A list of relevant papers is at the **Appendix**.

Council Business Division 1
Legislative Council Secretariat
6 May 2008

List of relevant papers

Committee	Paper	LC Paper No.
Meeting of Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting (ITB) on 28 May 2001	✧ Administration's paper : "E-government Strategy " ✧ Minutes of meeting	CB(1)1332/00-01(02) CB(1)1814/00-01
Meeting of ITB Panel on 10 December 2001	✧ Administration's paper : "Institutional arrangements for implementation of the Digital 21 Strategy and E-government initiatives" ✧ Minutes of meeting	CB(1)487/01-02(03) CB(1)703/01-02
Meeting of ITB Panel on 14 January 2002	✧ Administration's paper : E-government programme for 2002" ✧ Minutes of meeting	CB(1)756/01-02(03) CB(1)1010/01-02
Meeting of ITB Panel on 8 April 2002	✧ Administration's paper : "Realignment of leisure facilities booking systems and introduction of booking service under Electronic Service Delivery Scheme" ✧ Minutes of meeting	CB(1)1421/01-02(04) CB(1)1642/01-02
Meeting of ITB Panel on 8 July 2002	✧ Administration's paper : "Progress update on the E-government programme for 2002" ✧ Minutes of meeting	CB(1)2172/01-02(03) CB(1)2429/01-02
Meeting of ITB Panel on 7 November 2002	✧ Administration's paper : "Common look and feel for Government web sites" ✧ Minutes of meeting	CB(1)185/02-03(06) CB(1)425/02-03
Meeting of ITB Panel on 9 December 2002	✧ Administration's paper : "The interoperability framework – an enabler for joined-up E-government services" ✧ Minutes of meeting	CB(1)421/02-03(04) CB(1)670/02-03

Committee	Paper	LC Paper No.
Meeting of ITB Panel on 10 February 2003	✧ Administration's paper : "Progress update on E-government development"	CB(1)627/02-03(01)
	✧ Minutes of meeting	CB(1)1004/02-03
Meeting of ITB Panel on 21 July 2003	✧ Administration's paper : "Progress update on E-government development"	CB(1)2214/02-03(03)
	✧ Minutes of meeting	CB(1)2385/02-03
Meeting of ITB Panel on 12 January 2004	✧ Administration's paper : "Progress update on E-government programme"	CB(1)710/03-04(04)
	✧ Information note on the Electronic Service Delivery Scheme	CB(1)723/03-04
	✧ Minutes of meeting	CB(1)1044/03-04
Meeting of ITB Panel on 10 May 2004	✧ Administration paper : "Review of the Government institutional structure for delivering the information technology function"	CB(1)1713/03-04(03)
	✧ Minutes of meeting	CB(1)2108/03-04
Meeting of ESC on 16 June 2004	✧ Administration's paper : "Proposed merger of the Information Technology Services Department and the IT-related divisions of the Commerce, Industry and Technology Bureau (Communications and Technology Branch) to form a new entity entitled Office of the Government Chief Information Officer in the Commerce, Industry and Technology Bureau with effect from 1 July 2004	EC(2004-05)8
	✧ Minutes of meeting	ESC37/03-04
Meeting of FC on 25 June 2004	✧ Administration's paper	FCR(2004-05)17
	✧ Minutes of meeting	FC110/03-04

Committee	Paper	LC Paper No.
Meeting of ITB Panel on 12 July 2004	✧ Administration's paper : "Progress update on the E-government programme"	CB(1)2317/03-04(01)
	✧ E-government booklet on "Creating value for all"	CB(1)2326/03-04(01)
	✧ Minutes of meeting	CB(1)2469/03-04
Meeting of ITB Panel on 14 March 2005	✧ Administration's paper : "E-government – The next wave of development"	CB(1)1052/04-05(04)
	✧ Minutes of meeting	CB(1)1197/04-05
Meeting of ITB Panel on 9 January 2006	✧ Administration's paper : "New strategy for E-government service delivery"	CB(1)596/05-06(07)
	✧ Background brief on E-government programme	CB(1)597/05-06
	✧ Minutes of meeting	CB(1)821/05-06
Meeting of ITB Panel on 13 February 2006	✧ Meeting with deputations and the Administration on new strategy for E-government service delivery	--
	✧ Minutes of meeting	CB(1)1004/05-06
Meeting of FC on 3 March 2006	✧ Administration's paper on "Capital Works Reserve Fund Head 710 - Computerisation Subhead - Enhancing the E-government Infrastructure to Support the New Strategy for E-government Service Delivery"	FCR(2005-06)46
Meeting of ITB Panel on 12 June 2006	✧ Administration's paper : "Progress Update on the E-government Programme"	CB(1)1688/05-06(04)
	✧ Background brief on E-government programme	CB(1)1692/05-06
	✧ Minutes of meeting	CB(1)2100/05-06

Committee	Paper	LC Paper No.
Meeting of ITB Panel on 14 May 2007	✧ Administration's paper : "Report on Project Governance and Results" ✧ Minutes of meeting	CB(1)1552/06-07(03) CB(1)2282/06-07
Meeting of ITB Panel on 9 July 2007	✧ Administration's paper : "Update on implementation of Digital 21 Strategy and the E-government Programme" ✧ Minutes of meeting	CB(1)2034/06-07(03) CB(1)2396/06-07
Meeting of ITB Panel on 16 October 2007	✧ Minutes of meeting ✧ Follow-up paper	CB(1)325/07-08 CB(1)430/07-08
Meeting of ITB Panel on 12 November 2007	✧ Administration's paper : "Capital Works Reserve Fund Head 710 Computerisation Subhead A007GX – New administrative computer systems" ✧ Minutes of meeting ✧ Follow-up paper	CB(1)203/07-08(05) CB(1)461/07-08 CB(1)404/07-08(01)
Council meeting on 19 December 2007	✧ Question No. 15 raised by Hon SIN Chung-kai on computerization of various bureaux and departments	Hansard
Council meeting on 23 January 2008	✧ Question No. 7 raised by Hon WONG Kwok-hing on functions of smart identity cards	Hansard