LCQ14: Implementing digital government

Following is a question by the Hon Andrew Lam and a written reply by the Secretary for Innovation, Technology and Industry, Professor Sun Dong, in the Legislative Council today (April 10):

Question:

In response to a question raised by a Member of this Council at a special meeting of the Finance Committee held to discuss the Estimates of Expenditure 2023-2024, the Secretary for Innovation, Technology and Industry indicated that the Government had reserved $600 million as the expenditure for e-Government audit work and the implementation of digital government initiatives, and targeted to launch 100 digital government initiatives that would leverage advanced technology by end-2025 for providing more services to bring convenience to the public and benefit the business sector. It is learnt that the audit work commenced in 2022 and was completed in end-2023. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the analyses and recommendations of the aforesaid audit work, and set out the relevant information by policy bureaux/government departments (B/Ds);

(2) of the details and timetable of the infrastructural improvement works carried out or to be carried out in the light of the recommendations mentioned in (1); and

(3) as the Government indicated in the reply to a question raised by a Member of this Council on January 24 this year that from this year onwards, various B/Ds would progressively launch over a hundred of digital government and smart city initiatives, including the artificial intelligence (AI) initiatives of enhancing security in the public cargo working areas by employing AI and extending the AI chatbot service in the 1823 enquiry service, whether the Government will launch those AI initiatives first in the first half of this year; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that and the specific timetable for launching those AI initiatives?

Reply:

President,

My consolidated reply to the questions raised by the Hon Andrew Lam is as follows:

To further expedite the development of smart city and digital government, the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO) carried out the e-Government audit from 2022 to review the information technology (IT) systems and services of B/Ds, with a view to recommending digital government initiatives that could leverage technologies to enhance public services. The e-Government audit was conducted in two phases, and the audit work for both phases involving a total of 73 B/Ds had been completed.

Based on the analysis and recommendations of the e-Government audit, some examples on improving the services by leveraging advanced technologies include: application of AI and chatbot technologies to improve government hotline services; application of data analytics, geospatial analysis and visualisation dashboard technologies to improve service management; using blockchain technology to issue and verify certficates or licences electronically; and adopting "iAM Smart" and "Consented Data Exchange Gateway" to achieve "single portal for online government services" and facilitate data sharing among B/Ds. The breakdown of relevant recommendations is at Annex 1.

B/Ds are actively following up on the implementation of the digital government initiatives recommended by the audit, with the target to launch their respective initiatives progressively in the coming two years from 2024 to 2025. Some of the digital government initiatives being implemented are at Annex 2.

Compared with general IT systems, the development of digital service initiatives that adopt AI technology not only involves procurement of relevant technology products and services, but also requires additional processes to establish AI models, including preparing huge amount of training data, training of AI models and repeatedly adjusting and testing the accuracy of the models, etc. Therefore, initiatives that adopt AI technology usually take a longer time to develop. With regard to the digital government initiative of enhancing security in public cargo working areas by employing AI technology, the implementation work has commenced and is expected for launch in the first half of 2025. As for the initiative of enhancing the 1823 enquiry service through AI chatbot, relevant work is also underway and it is expected to be fully rolled out in the second half of 2024.

To support B/Ds in implementing the digital government initiatives recommended by the e-Government audit, OGCIO has set up the required digital infrastructures and shared services such as the Government Cloud Infrastructure Services, Big Data Analytics Platform, Shared Blockchain Platform and Chatbot-as-a-Service, etc. B/Ds will also adopt "iAM Smart", the one-stop personalised digital services platform, to realise "single portal for online government services" for enhancing user experience.