LCQ20: Smart Government

Following is a question by the Hon Jeffrey Lam and a written reply by the Secretary for Innovation and Technology, Mr Alfred Sit, in the Legislative Council today (January 20):

Question:

In 2017, the Government released the Smart City Blueprint for Hong Kong, which listed "Smart Government" as one of the major areas and proposed a number of measures to make use of innovative technology to enhance public services. However, in recent years, whenever the Government introduced new schemes (such as the Caring and Sharing Scheme in 2018 which disbursed $4,000 to eligible persons and last year's Employment Support Scheme), it still took quite a long time to establish related computer systems beforehand, and applicants were often required to fill in information repeatedly. In addition, it is learnt that the transmission of information on anti-epidemic work does not go smoothly among various government departments and public organisations. Some information is still transmitted through non-digital means (such as fax), rendering information processing labour-intensive, time-consuming and error-prone. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the government department(s) and their staffing establishments responsible for coordinating the efforts of various policy bureaux and government departments in implementing electronic services, and the relevant service indicators;

(2) of the process and average time taken for implementing electronic services in respect of existing public services;

(3) given that last month the Government launched "iAM Smart", a one-stop personalised digital services platform to enable members of the public to use various online services after logging in, with a single digital identity, the "iAM Smart" mobile application on their personal mobile phones, of the respective numbers of public services which can be provided through "iAM Smart" (i) at present and (ii) in future; whether it will set a target for the percentage of public services to be provided online; and

(4) whether it has specific plans for extensive application of artificial intelligence in the coming three years to enhance the efficiency in the provision of public services; if so, of the details?

Reply:

President,

After consulting relevant bureaux and departments (B/Ds), our reply to various parts of the question is as follows:

(1) and (2) In respect of promoting e-Government, the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO) has provided support for establishing infrastructure and standards, developing common e-Government services, cyber security, management and funding arrangement for information technology (IT) projects, and management of central IT infrastructure and services, etc. As at December 31, 2020, the OGCIO deployed 1 371 Analyst/Programmer grade staff to various B/Ds to provide IT-related services. B/Ds formulate their e-Government services implementation plans, including targets and timetable, having regard to the nature and requirements of their operations and public services. At present, the implementation time of e-Government services among various B/Ds is 18 months on average. Depending on the complexity and urgency, the development, testing and rollout of individual systems and related services (such as the services in response to the epidemic) can also be completed in a few weeks at the earliest. The Next Generation Government Cloud platform launched by the OGCIO in September 2020 could facilitate B/Ds expediting the implementation of their e-Government services. The Government has also developed an information management system to retain and facilitate the future use of information collected under the Cash Payout Scheme.

(3) The one-stop personalised digital services platform, "iAM Smart", was launched at the end of December 2020 to facilitate the public to log in and use government and commercial online services with a single digital identity, using their mobile phones. "iAM Smart" currently can access 27 commonly used online services provided by the government and public utilities such as the two electricity and the gas companies. It is expected that by mid-2021, there will be more than 110 government online services accessible through "iAM Smart". The "iAM Smart" platform also provides an auto form-filling service, "e-ME", which allows members of the public to choose to store commonly used personal data in advance, thereby obviating the need for filling in the same data for different application forms. The Government will take further steps to promote B/Ds to adopt IT to streamline processes and provide more convenient services to the public.

Under the Be the Smart Regulator Programme coordinated by the Efficiency Office (EffO), about 190 licences now support electronic submission of applications. The Be the Smart Regulator Programme targets to enable electronic submission of applications for all (about 400) licences by mid-2022, saving the need for the public to visit government offices in person. In addition, the EffO has also launched the Streamlining of Government Services Programme since mid-2019. Relevant B/Ds will continue to reform about 900 government services that involve applications and approvals, and about 450 of which have already supported electronic submission of applications. Under these two Programmes, B/Ds will adopt "iAM Smart" for suitable licence applications and government services to further enhance user experience.

(4) Artificial intelligence (AI) and big data are important technology areas underpinning smart city development. Their applications are conducive to delivery of quality and data-driven public services. The OGCIO launched an AI

chatbot "Bonny" on the GovHK portal at the end of 2019 to facilitate the public to search more than 3 300 government forms and e-Government services. The EffO also started piloting use of AI chatbot to handle 1823 public enquiries in December 2019. Through the Pilot Partnership Programme for Cyber Security Information Sharing, the OGCIO has, by using AI and big data technologies, categorised cyber security intelligence more promptly and accurately and disseminated the intelligence digest to different sectors since March 2020.

To promote application of big data more effectively in the government, the OGCIO launched a Big Data Analytics Platform in September 2020. The platform helps implement more AI and big data analytics projects through economies of scale and shared resources. Projects being implemented through this platform include:

(i) The OGCIO and the Transport Department are jointly developing a new Traffic Data Analytics System to analyse various traffic and transport data so as to more accurately assess traffic conditions, enhancing traffic management and improving efficiency;

(ii) The OGCIO is collaborating with the Architectural Services Department, the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department and the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department in analysing maintenance records and public complaints related to public toilets using big data analytics technology to strengthen public toilet management and maintenance measures;

(iii) through analysing the usage and search history of GovHK portal, the OGCIO can better understand users' needs for enhancing the portal and user experience; and

(iv) The OGCIO analyses the questions collected by chatbot "Bonny" to better understand public needs in order to keep enhancing the GovHK services.

The data analytics team established under the OGCIO will continue to provide data analytics advisory service to B/Ds, assist them in applying AI and big data analytics technologies (particularly in the areas of predictive maintenance and application assessment), and support them in implementing relevant projects.

Besides, through the Smart Government Innovation Lab set up in April 2019, the OGCIO will continue to promote active participation by industry players to assist government departments in adopting IT, including AI and big data analytics, with a view to improving public services.