LCQ21: Social media analytics platform

â€‹Following is a question by the Hon Elizabeth Quat and a written reply by the Secretary for Innovation and Technology, Mr Alfred Sit, in the Legislative Council today (December 9):

Question:

The Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO) is providing support to the various policy bureaux/government departments (B/Ds) to assist them in implementing big data analytics projects, such as developing a social media analytics platform (the analytics platform) so that B/Ds may, by analysing information on the social media, gauge the social sentiment better, for reference in policy formulation. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether the research and development (R&D) work for the analytics platform is undertaken by OGCIO itself, or by the contractor for the "big data analytics platform"; whether, during the design process, the various B/Ds are/were involved in the R&D work; if so, of their roles; of the commencement date of the R&D work, and the total amount of expenditure incurred so far, together with a breakdown; the estimated amount of expenditure and manpower needed for operating the analytics platform each year;

(2) of the functions and features of the analytics platform; and

(3) whether the analytics platform has come into operation; if so, of
(i) the date on which it came into operation,
(ii) a list of B/Ds using the platform,
(iii) the number of registered users,
(iv) the number of people using the platform each month, with a breakdown by hours of use, and
(v) actual examples of government departments having gauged the social sentiment better as a result of using the analytics platform?

Reply:

President,

Our consolidated reply to the questions raised by the Hon Elizabeth Quat is as below:

To promote applications of big data more effectively in the government to enhance public services, the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO) launched a Big Data Analytics Platform in September 2020 to support government departments' implementing more big data analytics projects through economies of scale and shared resources.

Under the Big Data Analytics Platform, OGCIO launched the Social Media Text Analytics System (System) in the same month. It allows bureaux and departments (B/Ds) to specify the subject keywords and the media (such as social media platforms, online newspapers and online fora) according to their needs, and through the System, analyse and understand information and trends on social media in the public domain, such as popular keywords, popular key topics, sentiment analysis, in order to understand the public's views and concerns on the issues involved. Such information would provide useful reference for policy formulation or enhancement of initiatives being implemented. For example, by collecting and analysing the latest discussion topics on information security on social media through the System, OGCIO could apprehend the hot topics on information security and risks or incidents, so as to help formulate speedily mitigation measures to strengthen the capabilities of government systems against cybersecurity threats.

Two hundred and sixty government staff from 29 B/Ds (list at Annex) have registered with the System since its launch. On a monthly basis, there were about 300 logins per month to view the detailed analysis of public opinions and the total viewing time was 33 hours.

System development work commenced in October 2019. In formulating the system design, the contractor has taken into account different B/Ds' views on the system functions and applications required, including functions like selecting types of social media for analysis and the receiving summaries of public opinions through electronic mails. The system development expenditure was about $267,000, and the estimated annual operating expenditure is $161,000, including a media information subscription fee of $118,000 of and $43,000 for system maintenance expenses.

The development works for the Social Media Text Analytics System and the Big Data Analytics Platform were undertaken by different contractors.