

17. E-GOVERNMENT

- 17.1 Civil Service Reform would be incomplete if it neglects the role of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). Harnessed appropriately, ICT changes the way government works, shares information and delivers its services to its clients both internal and external. ICT brings government closer to the people through personal computers, public access point, cyber cafes, telephones, etc. Benefits abound - they range from more informed public, greater convenience, rapid response, lower costs, increased transparency to better relationships with public.
- 17.2 The use of ICT to provide services is referred to as Electronic Government (E-Govt). The United Nations defines E-Govt as “a permanent commitment by government to improve the relationship between the private citizen and the Public Sector through enhanced, cost-effective and efficient delivery of services, information and knowledge.” A country’s “E-Govt” progress is gauged as “Emerging – Enhanced – Interactive – Transactional or Fully Integrated”. This implies that a country may be at any of these levels and move towards a higher category over time to eventually have all its systems, dealings and transactions fully integrated and electronic.
- 17.3 The E-Govt journey started in the late 70s with a goal of improving the Public Sector delivery. The National Computer Board (NCB), Central Informatics Bureau (CIB), Central Information Systems Division (CISD), University of Technology, Mauritius (UTM) and State Informatics Limited (SIL) were established with the object to ensure a systematic growth of ICT Sector; development of IT Manpower and Public Sector Computerisation, among others.
- 17.4 The Ministry of Information and Communication Technology (MICT) adopted the vision of E-Govt some two decades ago and has since paved the way under the direction of three National ICT Strategic Plans (NICTSP). These plans were elaborated with a view to realising Government’s vision to make the ICT sector an important pillar of the economy and to transform the country into a regional ICT hub and intelligent island (I–Mauritius). The last NICTSP 2011-2014 focuses on the HR constraints, the Ministry’s requirements, the restructuring of the institutional framework, the e-government initiatives and the National Information Security Strategy.
- 17.5 The E-Govt projects of Ministries/Departments/Organisations are moving towards interactive e-services, whereby they are not only meant to deliver services electronically, but are also designed to allow the public to interact with service providers.

- 17.6 The Bureau considers that there is still much to accomplish in the field of E-Govt despite the fact that Mauritius ranked 2nd in the Eastern Africa Region in the United Nations E-Government Survey 2012, when compared to the level of achievement in terms of computerisation of newly industrialised countries and a few fast developing Asian countries. The MICT along with Ministries/ Departments/Organisations should continue to develop strategies to unleash the potential for the total realisation of all E-Govt possibilities, to rethink on processes that can be changed so as to enable all citizens, organisations and enterprises to carry out their business electronically with Government more easily, more quickly and at lower costs and to adopt the simple philosophy that **“whatever services that can be delivered electronically must be delivered electronically”**.

Survey on Computerisation in the Public Sector

- 17.7 In January 2012, the Bureau carried out a General Survey to gather information on pertinent issues among which Computerisation in the Public Sector was a major component. The survey has helped the Bureau to take stock of the shortcomings and implementation problems arising from the recommendations made in our previous Reports and has facilitated the formulation of appropriate recommendations.
- 17.8 Data were collected via a survey questionnaire which was sent to all Heads of Ministries/Departments, Parastatal Organizations, Local Authorities as well as the Rodrigues Regional Assembly and a response rate of 51.4% was obtained.

Findings of the Survey

- 17.9 Of the organizations which responded to the survey, 38% (35) were from the Civil Service, 53% (48) were Parastatal Organisations and 9% (8) were from the Local Authorities. The Rodrigues Regional Assembly equally responded to the survey.
- 17.10 88% of organisations that responded have a website and 80% of those not having a website intend to have one in the future.
- 17.11 As regards the attendance system used, 63% of organisations have implemented an electronic attendance system. The finger print system has been reported to be the most common method of electronic attendance system used as 49% have implemented this system. Others (18%) have resorted to the clock card system. 17% have reported to be using other systems like electronic card and hand punch biometric system.
- 17.12 The survey has also revealed that half of the organizations (50%) have computerized their registry system. However, only a third of the organisations (38%) has computerized the personnel records system. The main reasons for the non-computerisation of the registry system and personnel records system were budgetary constraints, computerization not planned for the financial year, non-availability of an IT person to carry IT duties, lack of personnel and the limited size of the organization.

- 17.13 About 60% of organisations have benefitted from automation in terms of reduction in overall processing time. More than fifty percent (56%) have also reported that automation has brought a reduction in paper usage. Some 38% of organisations where counter services are provided, have benefitted from a reduction in waiting time.
- 17.14 A majority of organizations (61%) have designated an officer as Chief Information Officer (CIO).
- 17.15 The survey has revealed that only 44% of those organisations that responded, provide online services to their customers. Out of those not providing such services, 65% propose to do so in the future.
- 17.16 Based on the survey results, which are annexed at the end of this Chapter, we may conclude that the organizations are at different stages of computerization. We consider that recommendations made in previous Reports could have been implemented as a means to enhance service delivery. Some provisions/concepts which are still valid are being maintained, while a few of them are being improved. Hence, Public Sector organisations should continue in their efforts to pursue E-Govt initiatives to better inform the public; change mindset of its people; develop new competencies; add new service deliverables and improve response time. Ministries/Departments/Organizations, depending on the stage of development reached whether emerging, interactive or transactional, etc, should move to the next level within a timeline. In this respect, the Bureau pledges full commitment of Responsible Officers to continue identifying E-Govt initiatives in view of sustaining the vigour of the Civil Service.

Horizontal Applications

- 17.17 The **office computerisation programmes** namely the Registry System, the Personnel System and the Electronic Attendance System were meant for implementation across the Public Sector by end of year 2010. It has been observed that, in many cases, the systems have been implemented but are not being used effectively. **It is our considered view that, in order to derive the efficiency gains and the desired results of satisfying clients, all systems put in place should be maintained, used and updated regularly.**

Optimal Use of Infrastructural Technologies

- 17.18 For an efficient and effective E-Govt, the Public Sector should forge an e-lifestyle and adopt practices to optimise the use of IT equipment and reduce paper usage. We have geared our recommendations towards meeting these objectives.

Recommendation 1

17.19 We recommend that Ministries/Departments/Organisations should:

- (i) with the assistance of the MICT, regularly conduct a survey to evaluate the status of their IT equipment and systems applications with a view to replacing/upgrading outdated ICT tools and systems/applications to provide citizens and internal customers with improved services;**
- (ii) make optimum use of information and communication technologies in a judicious manner;**
- (iii) minimise, as far as possible, paper usage to cut down costs and reduce environmental impact so as to be in line with the “Maurice Ile Durable (MID)” vision;**
- (iv) indulge in duplex printing, which consists in printing at full size on both sides of each sheet;**
- (v) regularly update their websites and publish databases for general consumption, as well as provide updated information on the organisation’s activities, policies, etc; and**
- (vi) render their websites more informative and interactive so as to increase citizens’ participation and invite their comments or complaints.**

17.20 We further recommend that the provision of ICT equipment including laptops and internet access to staff, whether on a pooled or individual basis, should rest with Management, depending upon organisational needs.

Commitment to Action

17.21 One single enabling factor to change and move in the strategic direction is commitment at various levels. The desired transformation of the Public Sector through ICT coupled with the fulfilment of the ambitious E-Govt goals is a complex and challenging endeavour, which can only be realised when both Management and staff are fully committed, supportive, collaborative and participative in the initiatives.

Recommendation 2

17.22 We recommend that Responsible Officers, as well as senior officers should take the lead to transform and modernise their Ministries/Departments/Organisations through computerisation, automation of work processes and E-Govt initiatives and thereby inculcate an e-culture among their staff.

Training

- 17.23 We recognise that the key to achieve all the benefits of computerisation is to ensure that all public officers are technology savvy. Moreover, in many cases it has been observed that the knowledge gained from training cannot always be used effectively as same very often becomes obsolete with the rapid advancements in the field of IT. We view that officers should be provided the necessary training regularly so as to keep abreast with new applications. **We recommend accordingly.**
- 17.24 At present, public officers are required to possess the Internet and Computing Core Certification (IC3) as a minimum or equivalent IT related certification. Schemes of service have been reviewed to reflect this amendment. A few Ministries/Departments have also made arrangements for advanced training of their staff for optimum use of office technologies. **The Bureau considers that Ministries/Departments/Organisations should maintain this arrangement.**
- 17.25 The lack of proficiency in IT at the upper echelon has been the cause of delays in the implementation of certain projects. This fact has been reported by the Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Unit of the World Bank in its Technical Overview Note for Mauritius.
- 17.26 We consider that officers at the top management level should be provided advanced training in ICT. **We are recommending accordingly.**

Recommendation 3

- 17.27 **We recommend that the MICT in collaboration with the MCSAR, should mount appropriate award training courses in ICT for Chief Executives and their immediate subordinates involved in strategic planning, formulation of policies, decision making, coordination and implementation of projects and staff development.**
- 17.28 **We further recommend that upon successful completion of the training courses, these officers should be granted one increment at the point reached in their respective salary scales. For those drawing flat salaries, we recommend the payment of a non-pensionable lump sum equivalent to 12 times the value of the last increment read from the salary scale of the grade of Principal Assistant Secretary.**

Chief Information Officer

- 17.29 We introduced the concept of Chief Information Officer (CIO) in the 2003 PRB Report. Each Ministry/Department/Organisation could designate a CIO to lead E-Govt projects and act as prime mover of ICT. Though this concept has contributed in bringing E-Govt to some extent through the setting up of various computerisation projects, it has not brought the desired results. The Bureau considers that an alternative arrangement would be appropriate to boost E-Govt and computerisation/automation in Ministries/Departments/Organisations. The

posting of an IT professional from the MICT in Ministries/Departments/Organisations would be catalytic in boosting E-Govt in the civil service. To this end, we are providing for a designate position of Head ICT, where incumbent would be required to lead E-Govt projects and initiatives in the sector concerned.

E-Govt Initiatives

17.30 E-Govt is a paradigm shift over the traditional approaches in public administration as a means to provide government services and information to the public through the use of electronic means. This new paradigm is likely to bring about a revolution in the quality of service delivered to the citizens in organisations. It will usher in greater transparency in the governing process, save time in the provision of services, increase the speed of transactions, complete tasks rapidly, enhance the consistency of outcomes, become a platform for a single window service provider, simplify procedures for better office and record management, reduce undesirable practices, improve behaviour, attitude and job handling capacity of the personnel and render the management of public resources more effective. Hence, we strongly believe that the infusion of ICT will be instrumental in strengthening the quality of citizens-centric services delivered. Therefore, the clarion call is “adopt the E-Govt”

Recommendation 4

17.31 We recommend that all Ministries/Departments/Organisations should make earnest efforts to complete their E-Govt programme as well as to:

- (i) make a policy choice in favour of computerisation;**
- (ii) mobilise resources in connection with the setting up of E-Govt projects;**
- (iii) establish complete connectivity between Ministries/Departments/Organisations (database compatibility with one another, interoperability of E-Govt project);**
- (iv) simplify information provided to the public in a way/language that is easily understandable and with which they are comfortable with e.g. transliteration from English to local language (Creole);**
- (v) change the mind set of government’s employees who are accustomed to working only in manual mode, through Training and Development to spread awareness among them at all levels;**
- (vi) render documents stored in systems legally valid;**
- (vii) bridge the digital divide between Ministries/Departments/Organisations; and**
- (viii) generate confidence among individuals and organisations in conducting online transactions and communication.**

Recommendation 5

- 17.32 We also recommend the setting up of an E-Govt Monitoring Committee in all Ministries/Departments/Organisations under the Chairmanship of the Responsible Officer and comprising the “Head, ICT”, Heads of Units/ Sections, among others, to formulate policies regarding the setting up of E-Govt projects in their respective organisations, spearhead strategies with a view to modernising their organisation through the use of new technologies, ensure the implementation of e-initiatives and their sustainability, monitor and evaluate e-initiatives/E-Govt projects and tender advice on corrective actions, if any.**
- 17.33 The Committee will be required to submit bi-annually a progress report to the MICT, which in turn, will report annually on the progress made regarding E-Govt in the Public Sector to the Public Sector Reforms Steering Committee under the chairmanship of the Secretary to Cabinet and Head of the Civil Service and comprising, among others, senior public officers and co-opted representatives of Staff Associations having the desired attitude and mindset.**

ANNEX

**SURVEY RESULTS
COMPUTERISATION IN THE SECTOR**

S.N			%	
			Yes	No
1	Website		87.8	12.2
2	Intention of the organisation to have a website in the future		80	20
3	Electronic Attendance System in the organisation		63.3	36.7
4	Type of Electronic Attendance System Used			
	4.1	Finger Print	48.9	
	4.2	Clock Card	17.8	
	4.3	Other	16.7	
5	Computerisation of the Registry System		50	50
6	Computerisation of the Personnel Record System		37.8	62.2
7	Benefits of automation			
	7.1	Reduction of overall processing times	60	40
	7.2	Reduction of waiting time in case counter services are provided	37.8	62.2
	7.3	Reduction in paper usage	55.6	44.4
8	Designated person as CIO		36.7	63.3
9	Provision of online services to customers		38.9	61.1
10	Proposal of the organisation to provide online services in the future		65.2	34.8
