



TRACK II : E-GOVERNMENT

1. The Current State of Thailand's e-Government Development Program

Thailand's e-Government initiative encompasses the establishment of objectives for various government organizations to use the internet as a channel for disseminating information to the general public by creating activities that foster two-way communication and delivering online services. The organizations are expected to create websites with webboards, email engines and links that provide relevant information. Furthermore, there must be back office systems such as document management system, financial and accounting system, budgeting system and electronic purchasing system (e-procurement). Smart cards are also to be issued to the people. Provisions for payment services through counter service and the internet must be available. Call centers for the government and the various departments must be established, and government rules and regulations are to be amended to meet the changes that arise from the implementation of e-Government initiatives.

The e-Government implementation efforts have achieved its targets with nearly all 266 government units having their own websites. 50% of these websites have webboards and over 90% has email reply facilities. Smart card project has also begun and its technical specifications or Terms of Reference (TOR) have been drafted and the first smart card is to be issued by March 2004. The website for the general public (e-Citizen portal) "ecitizen.go.th" has begun service and the government call center has also been established as pilot projects under the Secretariat of the Prime Minister, the Office of the Prime Minister, the Department of Consular Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Office of the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Information and Communications Technology.

Projects still under development which are expected to be completed by 2005 includes the e-Citizen project to link related citizen data together, the government back office system project under the name GFMIS (Government Finance Management Information System) and the development of e-Procurement system to become Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system for the entire public sector.

2. Strengths and Weaknesses of Thailand's e-Government Development

Strengths

1. Thai public and private sectors have invested substantial amounts in information technology infrastructure.

2. The government places emphasis on ICT development by assigning the Ministry of Information and Communications Technology (MICT) as the centralized agency in the promotion and development of ICT.
3. Leaders and Executives attribute increasing importance to ICT.
4. The geographic location of Thailand make it uniquely suitable as the gateway of Asia
5. Thailand's human resources have the potential in software development that rivals any other countries.
6. ICT has been applied to add value in products
7. The market for ICT has been expanding.
8. Information infrastructure and basic syllabus for ICT education have been developed
9. CIOs have been appointed in every governmental agencies.
10. Large numbers of vocational students have graduated with competent ICT usage skills.

Weaknesses

1. Thailand has not amended regulations and mechanisms to support its advancement into the new economy.
2. Lack of English literacy hinders effective use of ICT.
3. The curriculum and instructional method do not support further research and development efforts.
4. There is a lack of personnel proficient in various disciplines of ICT.
5. The lack of resources to support research and development methods and the commercialization of successful results.
6. The lack of several factors that support research and development that bring research results for further development and usage commercially.
7. Lack of database and key indicators for management of existing database.
8. Absence of a standard for the exchange of information between government organizations.

3. Legal issues impeding Thailand's e-Government development

Currently Thailand still does not have important ICT laws enacted and are still under development. These laws concern Data Protection Law, National Information Infrastructure, Computer Crime Law and Electronic Funds Transfer Law which will provide fundamental foundations for Thailand's legislative framework as it steps into the new economy.

Recommendations for Thailand's ICT Laws development

- 1) Phase I : Develop a sense of security and trust for the business environment by focusing on the legislative issues which includes electronic transactions, digital signatures and an electronic fund transfer and the basic information technology infrastructure.
- 2) Phase II : Increase public confidence and trust by setting goals to develop computer crime laws to provide protection against possible internet threats.
- 3) Phase III : Protect privacy and ensure the security of individual citizens by setting goals to develop the data protection law.

- 4) Phase IV : Raise the scope of protection to comply with international standards by setting goals to develop intellectual property law and copyright law that abide with international standards.

4. The expectation of the Parliament's role for the e-Government's development

The parliament should consider important issues that affect the development of ICT laws such as double criminality, co-operation between law enforcement authorities and legislative authorities, laws that can be enforced on overseas online transactions, the civil liability of internet providers, the criteria for providing online and offline services, government regulation versus self-regulation, top-down versus bottom-up decisions on important issues, controlling SPAM e-mail and protective measures to enhance the confidence of the general public.
