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E-PAR

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TRACK I : E-PARLIAMENT

1. The present stage of e-Parliament in Thailand

The development of an e-parliament involves the utilization of ICT as a tool in supporting the administration, the operations and the services of the parliament. This consists of legislative processes, the duties of the representative of the people, as well as providing advisory and consultancy services to the general public, while allowing them to participate in the formulation of policies and the development of democracy, through the use of electronic media (e-Democracy). The framework for the development of the program is divided into 3 phases. Phase I was initiated during the implementation of the 1st ICT Master Plan of the Government, from 2001 to 2003. The main aim of this phase was to disseminate legislative information to the public. This encompassed the development of a database of the legislative process, internal management information system, information system to support the workings of the parliament and a system to disseminate information to the general public. Six of eight projects have achieved their results accordingly.

Successful implementation of the application software from Phase I resulted in the use of information systems for legislative processes, debates and consideration of policies, parliamentary sessions, indexing and searching of Thai laws and academic information. Information systems for organizational management which includes human resources, fiscal budgeting, treasury and finance and security maintenance is also used.

To provide access to the information of the parliament, the Thai Parliament has installed an infrastructure consisting of computer hardware, software and network. The main network has a data transfer rate of 1 gigabit/second and 800 outlet ports were installed to allow connection to the intranet and internet.

In order to facilitate the disbursement of information to the general public, the Parliament disseminates information on the websites of www.parliament.go.th, www.senate.go.th and www.parliamentjunior.in.th which provides information for children and the younger generation. All three websites serve the general public and provide a level of interactivity, such as the use of web boards, online information and live broadcast of parliamentary sessions.

In regard to personnel development for supporting e-Parliament development efforts, the Thai Parliament encounters the same problem faced by other organizations, which is the lack of adequately trained ICT personnel. Short term solution to this problem has been done by providing ICT training for the staff in each department of the Parliament. Work that requires ICT skills such as system analysis and design, systems, database and network development are outsourced to the private sectors.

The goal of Phase II according to the 2nd ICT Master Plan of the Parliament 2004-2006 is to further the development of e-Parliament to provide quality, reliability and secured services to the public in terms of contents, usability and resource management.

Phase III will likely continue the efforts as set forth in the 2nd ICT Master Plan to direct the development of e-Parliament to completely utilize the legislative information and become the National Legislation Information Center.

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

An evaluation of the Parliament's ICT status with regard to the 2nd ICT Master Plan of the Parliament 2004-2006 revealed the following strengths and weaknesses:

Strengths

1. The network installed in the Parliament is capable of handling image, voice and data transmission.
2. The Parliament is connected to other government agencies through its information network.
3. Members of the Parliament support and give importance to ICT related work.
4. More people in the Parliament are learning ICT and becoming aware of its uses.
5. The Parliament is the center for legislative information.
6. The ICT Committee of the Parliament has been established to help formulate ICT policies for the Parliament.

Weaknesses

1. The management and security of the network still needs to be further improved.
2. There is a lack of specialists with high ICT proficiency.
3. There needs to be collaboration between related departments to ensure that the information entered into the system is standardized, accurate and up-to-date.
4. The management of legislative information lacks collaborative effort.
5. There is an absence of sustained promotional effort to create public awareness about the legislative information of the parliament.
6. No research and development efforts have been done to increase the efficiency of the ICT system of the Parliament.

3. Problems that impede the development of Thailand' e-Parliament and methods to solve them.

- 3.1 There are no standardized guidelines for ICT systems and data structure to facilitate data exchange between government agencies
- 3.2 The understanding and cooperation in using ICT to support the management, operations and services of the Parliament is still limited.
- 3.3 Personnel development efforts to increase ICT skills are hindered by budgetary constraints.

4. The expectation of the role of the parliament in the development of the e-Parliament.

The development of e-Parliament of Thailand is to enable participation of the public in the development of democracy (e-Democracy) in Thailand. The first stage is the utilization of ICT to improve the internal management process of the parliament to achieve the goals as

stated in the ICT Master Plan. This includes establishing websites to provide online information services to parliamentarians and the general public, introduce on-line transactions by re-aligning the management process to respond to the needs of the parliamentarians and the general public, enabling public participation in the process of collecting feedback and in the formulation of key policies.

The findings in the research “The Present State of e-Parliament and the Development of IT in Thailand” set forth the following developmental guidelines.

- 4.1 Internal Management: To use ICT as a tool for developing internal management processes in the various departments of the Parliament. For example, the utilization of the software system called GFMS (Government Financial Management Information System) to standardize the data exchange between various government agencies will allow the Parliament to make use of the database in monitoring the fiscal budget.
- 4.2 Management of the Legislative Process: The Thai Parliament must encourage the Members of Parliament to use ICT to increase efficiency in the legislative process. For example, Members should use e-mail to send and receive information pertinent to their duties which includes parliamentary and committee meetings. Furthermore, they should use the technology for presentation in parliamentary and committee meetings and use the internet to search for information and query the Parliament’s database. At the same time the Parliament should disseminate information and provide online services to the general public. For example, e-Library, e-Learning and interactive system for obtaining responses from the public and encourage their participation in the democratic process. This can be achieved by utilizing the basic infrastructure to minimize investment redundancies such as the G-DX system (Government Data Exchange) and the e-Service portal, which already serves as an important channel in providing services to the general public.
- 4.3 e-Services Development: This may be done by conducting a survey of the requirements of the Members of Parliament and the public, so that a system could be developed to meet their needs.
- 4.4 Human Resources Development: The Thai Parliament should modify the operational process and the organizational structure to create a modern organization that is highly flexible. Also the short term goal should place emphasis to rectify existing policies and standards in the human resource development process to become more responsive to the fast paced changes in the world of ICT. Work that require high level of technological expertise may be outsourced to the private sector, and the collaboration between various government agencies must be fostered to leverage from information systems that have already been developed.