

17. E-GOVERNMENT

- 17.1 One of the main thrusts of this Report is the modernisation of the public sector through technological innovation and digitalisation for an enhanced service delivery to meet citizens', non-citizens' and other stakeholders' needs. In this perspective, e-government would play a linchpin role in giving a new drive to the Civil Service. In fact, an optimal use of technology would transform the way in which government functions are developed, organised and executed.
- 17.2 For several decades, the Bureau has been advocating about the need to modernise the public sector through various reforms including e-government initiatives and computerisation of work processes. Since the start of the e-government journey, many projects have been developed and implemented, most of them relating to the delivery of counter services. The realisation of e-government projects in the civil service rests primarily on the Ministry of Technology, Communication and Innovation (MTCI) and Divisions/ Parastatal Bodies falling under its *aegis*. In a few cases, organisations have recourse to contractual employment of IT professionals from the private sector to set up, implement and monitor different IT projects/systems.
- 17.3 The Bureau has noted that despite the implementation of various systems in the Public Sector, the adoption of modern technologies seems quite invisible, moving at a slow pace. This fact has been confirmed by our survey findings which are discussed at a later stage in this chapter, and by the observations made by parties concerned during consultations in the context of this Report.
- 17.4 As per Government Programme, the MTCI would come up with a National Technology, Communication and Innovation Strategic Plan 2015-2019 with a view to elaborating strategies to transform Mauritius into an Intelligent and Smart Island. As regards e-Government, Mauritius ranked 2nd in Africa and 76th out of 193 countries as per the United Nations e-Government Survey 2014. Moreover, according to Measuring the Information Society Report 2015, Mauritius positioned 73rd in the ICT Development Index and 1st in Africa. Nevertheless, we strongly view that if the public sector has to keep pace with government's vision, a titanic task has then to be accomplished, in terms of technological innovation and computerisation/ automation of work processes.

Survey on E-Government

- 17.5 The Bureau conducted a general survey on various topics, including E-Government, in July 2015, to gather feedback on our recommendations and to tap the views of our customers on pertinent issues. The findings of the survey has enabled the Bureau to formulate appropriate recommendations geared towards giving a new impetus to the e-government agenda and computerisation/modernisation of a technology-driven public sector.

- 17.6 A survey questionnaire was sent to all Heads of Ministries/Departments, Parastatal Organisations, Local Authorities and Rodrigues Regional Assembly. An overall response rate of 55.7% was recorded.

Survey Findings

- 17.7 The survey findings have revealed, among others, that a few organisations still do not have a website, while 43% of organisations provide online services. Suggestions on how online services could be improved comprise, among others, offering e-payment options, employing the right and qualified candidates in the field, better and faster access to the internet at lower prices, training of staff, provision of better hardware infrastructure, introduction of mobile services through various applications and rendering services more user friendly.
- 17.8 Almost all the organisations who have embarked in a computerisation project have noted a reduction in the overall process time as well as in paper usage. However, we have observed that most of the projects consisted mainly in the computerisation of only part of a system or work procedure. Just a few organisations (3.1%) have adopted an e-Document Management System.
- 17.9 Only 22% of organisations have set up a Committee or Cell which is responsible for spearheading e-government projects, whilst 61% have provided training courses in ICT to their senior officers.
- 17.10 As regards access to e-libraries, 32% of organisations, comprising mainly educational and research institutions, regularly make use of this facility. 43% of respondents provide library or similar facilities to its employees and customers.
- 17.11 In addition to the survey findings, we have observed that many recommendations made with reference to e-government have either not been implemented or implemented partly, including those introduced in previous Reports. We may thus safely infer that e-government and public sector computerisation are not among the priority goals of organisations despite government's objective of graduating the ICT sector to the next level and embedding the use of technology in the day to day life of public servants.
- 17.12 Moreover, following consultation with parties concerned, the Bureau has taken note that the major impediments of spearheading e-government initiatives in the Public Sector, including the automation of work processes are, amongst others, financial constraints; shortage of IT personnel from the Central Informatics Bureau (CIB), and Central Information Systems Division (CISD); lack of IT professionals possessing the desired skills and competencies, resistance from staff to change; absence of an e-culture; inadequate collaboration among departments; and an undefined role on ownership of

projects. We further wish to point out that one of the biggest challenges for a successful automation of work processes is an unchanging mindset with respect to the transition from paper to electronic/virtual transaction coupled with a lack of commitment from Management to spearhead e-government initiatives.

- 17.13 Taking into consideration all the above mentioned impediments, in this Report, the Bureau is coming up with new recommendations with a view to stimulating the setting up of e-government projects as well as public sector computerisation. A few existing recommendations have been scrapped or revisited. In addition, we have taken heed of the digital revolution in this new age, driven by innovations in e-commerce, e-communication and an increased deployment of the internet and web technologies. In this perspective, we are also advocating for the increased use of digital technology for an easier and faster access to information.

Horizontal Applications

- 17.14 We have been recommending in previous reports for the rolling out of the Computerised Registry System, Computerised Personnel System and the Electronic Attendance System. The Bureau has been apprised that there are still many organisations which have not yet set up same. In some places, these systems have been established but are not operational due to technical problems which have been left unsolved or a lack of follow-up from Management or reluctance from staff to use the new system. Moreover, we have been informed that the Human Resource Management Information System (HRMIS) Project, driven by the MCSAR, has taken over the Personnel System. We are, therefore, recommending for the implementation of the Electronic Attendance System and Computerised Registry System.

Recommendation 1

- 17.15 **We recommend that:**
- (i) the Computerised Registry System, HRMIS and the Electronic Attendance System should mandatorily be implemented in every Ministry/Department/Organisation by December 2016; and**
 - (ii) the MCSAR in collaboration with the MTCI should devise a proper mechanism to ensure that the abovementioned systems are put in place and used effectively in the Public Sector.**

Web Sites

- 17.16 The Bureau has taken cognizance that a few organisations still do not have a website. We consider that in this digital era, it is imperative for every public organisation to have a website where relevant information may be provided to and accessed by customers/clients. Furthermore, in the context of this Report, parties concerned have represented that websites should be more informative

and/or interactive, so as to enlist the participation of citizens/customers in expressing their views/comments. We wish to highlight that recommendations in that direction exist but have not been implemented by many organisations. We are, therefore, maintaining these provisions.

Recommendation 2

17.17 We recommend that every organisation should have a website irrespective of its size, which should be updated at regular intervals.

17.18 We further recommend that websites should as far as possible be informative and interactive in view of promoting interaction between citizens and Government.

Office Automation System (OAS)

17.19 The Bureau has observed through the survey findings that most e-government projects are directed towards the delivery of counter services. Only a few organisations (3.1%) have set up an e-Document Management System whereby the majority of work processes have been computerised. As regards the objective of transforming the work environment into a paperless office, it has remained at the recommendation stage.

17.20 We consider that, if the public sector is to be driven by innovation and technology, it is of critical importance to bring a paradigm shift in the manner of conducting business. The existing traditional manual work processes involving heavy bureaucracy and significant use of paper should give way to an Office Automation System (OAS) comprising an e-Document Management System (e-DMS). Under this setup, documents would be available in electronic form entailing a substantial reduction in paper usage, standardisation of business processes and procedures, saving of time in archiving documents and reduction in administrative costs whilst increasing effectiveness, efficiency and productivity in the public sector as well as promoting an interactive mode of communication with both internal and external customers.

17.21 In addition, the public sector, being one of the largest sectors of the economy, stands to gain from this paradigm shift. The OAS will allow for a greater pervasion of digital technology and improve the working environment, rendering it almost paperless and equipping it with state-of-the-art facilities. However, the successful implementation of such a system will depend, to a large extent, on the mindset of public sector employees as well as the determination and commitment of top management to make things happen.

Driving the change

17.22 Since the beginning of the e-government journey, the spearheading of e-government initiatives has been the responsibility of top management. It has been reported to the Bureau that many e-government projects which had been identified did not materialise owing to a problem of ownership of these projects. With a view to addressing this issue, we are recommending for the setting up of a mechanism which will spur e-government initiatives, spearhead the rolling out of the OAS and foster an e-culture in the whole public sector.

Recommendation 3

17.23 We recommend:

- (i) the setting up of an E-Government and Computerisation Steering Committee at the MTCl, within three months as from the date of publication of this Report, under the Chairmanship of the Chief Technical Officer, representatives of the CIB, IT Security Unit and CISD as well as representative/s of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MOFED), among others, to formulate policies for each Ministry/Department/Organisation regarding computerisation plan and rolling out of the OAS, and modernisation of the public sector through the deployment of IT;**
- (ii) that each organisation should in consultation with the MOFED, make necessary arrangements for the voting of a budget regarding the setting up and implementation of the OAS and any relevant e-Government initiative or related IT issue; and**
- (iii) that the e-Government and Computerisation Steering Committee should submit a progress report on a bi-annual basis to the Steering Committee and Public Sector Reforms.**

Training

17.24 For a successful implementation of the computerisation projects, employees should be provided relevant training in IT and use of office technologies as well as new applications. Such training may be provided in-house in collaboration with the Civil Service College and MTCl.

17.25 Moreover, in the last Report, we provided for the MTCl to mount an appropriate training course in IT for Chief Executives and their subordinates, against payment of compensation to those who have followed the said course. We have been apprised that this recommendation has not been implemented. In view thereof, we are making a general recommendation.

Recommendation 4

17.26 We recommend that Management of each Ministry/Department/Organisation should make necessary arrangements for the training of its employees in IT, including Chief Executives, in collaboration with the Civil Service College and MTCI.

Digital Library

17.27 Management and Staff Associations have represented that the existing manual mode of having access to information has become outdated, time consuming, inefficient and ineffective, hence impacting adversely on service delivery. Moreover, with the emergence of the knowledge society, the Bureau has received many requests from various quarters for the payment of an allowance on account of Continuous Professional Development.

17.28 We have carefully examined the issue in-depth and recognise that rapid advances in information technologies have revolutionised access to information and knowledge, where digital information is substituting print-based information. In this respect, we are advocating for employees/organisations to have recourse to digital or e-libraries for an instant and easier access to information, so as to keep abreast of new trending issues and developments in their sectors of activity. In the public sector, only a few organisations (32%) have recourse to e-libraries, as revealed by our survey findings.

17.29 We strongly believe that the public sector should make full use of e-libraries as they enable on-line access to international periodicals, books, research papers, studies, journals, consultancy reports, data and statistical tools, among others. We also acknowledge that access to most of these digital libraries involves additional cost in terms of subscription/membership fees. We are making appropriate recommendations to that effect.

Recommendation 5

17.30 We recommend that the MCSAR, in collaboration with the MTCI, should make the necessary arrangements for:

- (i) Ministries/Organisations to have access to both local and international e-libraries as per their specific requirements; and**
- (ii) the setting up of a digital library for Government, as a form of a repository for all Government publications, thereby enabling public sector employees to have access to relevant information and databases.**

17.31 We further recommend that the MOFED, as a strategic partner in the e-transformation of government, should provide its full support in making the e-library concept a reality.

Recommendation 6

17.32 We further recommend that Responsible Officers should initiate action for the voting of a dedicated budget with regard to expenses involved in having access to the different e-libraries.

Optimal Use of Infrastructural Technologies

17.33 Many representations made in the context of this Report regarding public sector computerisation were geared towards the provision of updated ICT tools and facilities including laptops, tablets, smart phones, PCs, printers and scanners. The Bureau was also requested, among others, to grant internet access to all employees including those operating at lower levels.

17.34 We wish to highlight that provisions regarding the abovementioned issues already exist. Concerning the provision of ICT equipment and internet access, same would depend on the organisational needs and available resources. However, we view that in the context of the implementation of the OAS, the right ICT tools would be provided on a more or less individual basis and the use of modern communication facilities be provided. We are maintaining the existing provisions regarding the use of infrastructural technologies.

Recommendation 7

17.35 We recommend that:

- (i) Ministries/Departments/Organisations should, with the assistance of the MTCl, replace or update obsolete ICT equipment and upgrade systems/applications as well as provide state-of-the-art facilities; and**
- (ii) Ministries/Departments/Organisations should make necessary arrangements to provide e-communication and video conferencing facilities, among others, as a means of communication with the outside world and ensure that such facilities are optimally and judiciously used.**

Recommendation 8

17.36 We further recommend that management should:

- (i) continue to provide ICT equipment and internet access to staff on an individual or pooled basis, depending on organisational needs; and**
- (ii) to the extent it is possible, provide access to internet through the appropriate IT equipment to employees operating at lower levels.**
