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SUCCESS OF E-GOVERNMENT INITIATIVE IN SARAWAK

ABSTRACT

The Sarawak Government has acknowledged the prospects of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and the Internet to its citizens. The rising need for e-government applications leads to the needs of the Sarawak Government to improve their online services. In the race for providing online services to the citizens, the Sarawak government does not want to be left behind. This paper highlights the success story behind e-government initiatives in Sarawak. First, it will explain the ICT governance and administration and also discuss the existing e-government online applications and tools. Then, this article will highlight some of the e-government programmes to bridge the digital divide and the effort on assessing Sarawak's readiness into a knowledge society. This article will conclude with some suggestions and recommendations.

Keywords: E-government, Sarawak, Online Applications and Tools.

1. INTRODUCTION

Governments around the world, as well as in Malaysia have acknowledged the prospects presented by the Information and Communication Technology (ICT), especially the Internet. New ways to distribute services and to interact with citizens are continually being explored through the existence of e-government (EG). EG is basically a digital bridge linking people and/or businesses to government and vice versa. It optimises government working procedures without time and space restriction [6]. Successful e-government frameworks and applications improves working efficiency and offers highly efficient services to the society.

In the race for providing online services to the citizens, the Sarawak government does not want to be left behind. The success story of e-government initiatives in Sarawak started way back in 1995. Ten years later, in mid-2006, the state authorities have ordered one hundred percent of all 26 local authorities to provide their services online. Currently, seven of these have implemented the Electronic Local Authorities (ELA) programme. In this paper, we highlight the factors behind the success of e-government in Sarawak.

This paper is organized as follows. The next section briefly explains the ICT governance and administration in Sarawak. Section 3 draws attention to the existing

EG online applications and tools. In section 4, some of e-government programmes and initiatives are discussed. Section 5 highlights related issues with the e-government projects. We conclude with some suggestions and recommendations.

2. GOVERNANCE AND ICT ADMINISTRATION

2.1 ICT Unit, Chief Minister Department

Realising the importance of administrating and monitoring the e-government initiative, the Sarawak Government has set up a unit called the ICT Unit. The unit, under the Chief Minister's Department has its own EG section. Its responsibility is to manage and update public service web pages, as well as to establish related policies, standards, guidelines and procedures. This section has another four sub-sections namely, EG Development, Web Administration, ICT Security and ICT Community Development.

2.2 Sarawak Information Systems Sdn. Bhd. (SAINS)

Sarawak Information Systems Sdn. Bhd. (SAINS), being an ICT arm of the state government, pioneered the