NEGOTIATING HEAVY TRAFFIC

The Electronic Government Agency is developing a real-time feed for users to access road conditions nationwide, among other projects

STORY: **SASIWIMON BOONRUANG**

PHOTO COURTESY OF EGA

The Electronic Government Agency (EGA) was founded in 1997 as a central unit to utilise information and communication technology among various government agencies. Two decades later, it is on course to develop many tools through the analysis of big data with the hope of promoting efficiency among government offices as well as for the benefit of taxpayers.
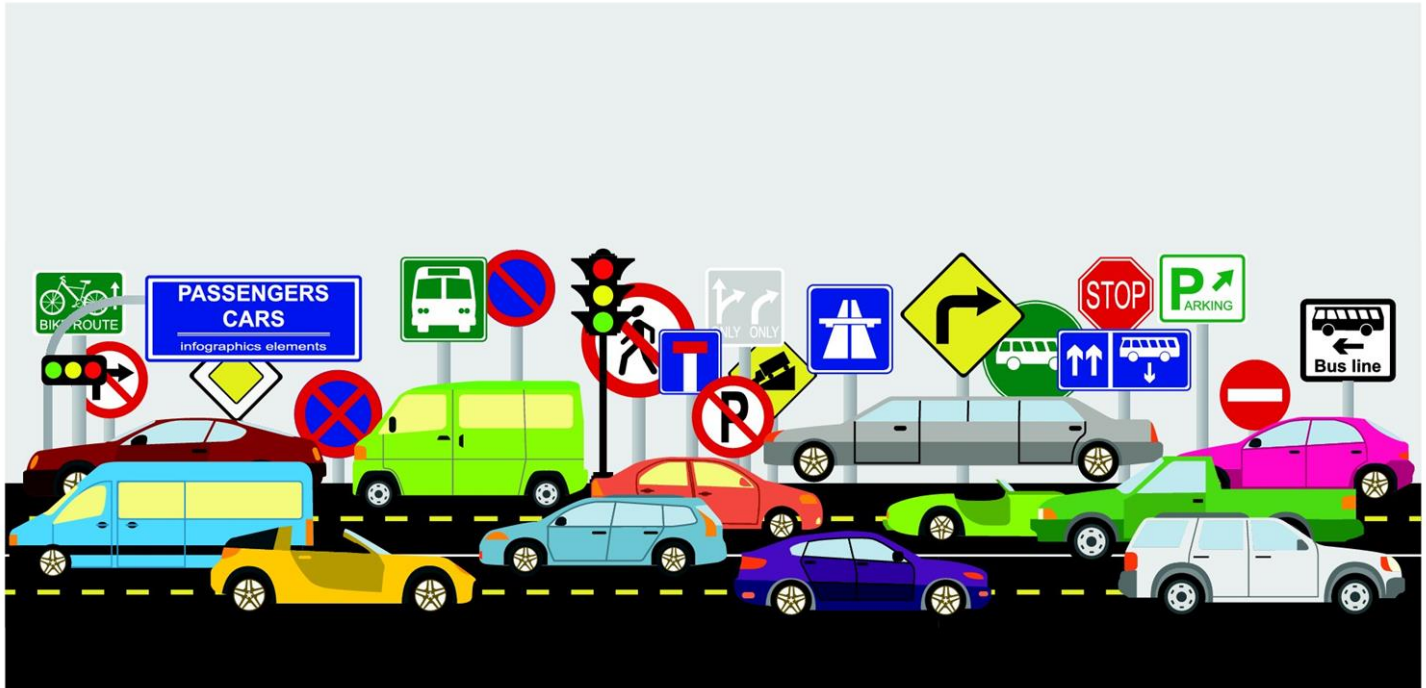
One useful service being developed is a real-time feed of traffic conditions nationwide, which users can access from EGA's website. The agency believes this is a way to harness IT to facilitate road users, especially during long holidays, and it has recently signed an MoU with the Department of Highways (DOH), while the National Electronics and Computer Technology Centre is developing the big data analytical tools.

The DOH manages data from numerous CCTVs at points of traffic monitoring as well as other related data. All of this is part of big data management that should be utilised for the public's benefit, according to DOH's director-general Thanin Somboon.

"Analysing the feed this way is better and more accurate than Google, because users can view the updated data in real time and it will enable them to plan the route that they should travel," said EGA director Sak Segkhoonthod.

In the next three years, the government sector will enter another chapter of data integration among agencies. The first phase is to generate open data and make it ready for the public. For example, the Ministry of Education offers the open data of 30,000 school locations around the country that citizens can use in planning their children's education. However, the open data is not just static information, but also video, and many other types of data are integrated through the new system.

Sak noted that EGA is working towards improving data management. By this year, there will be four focus groups concerning data utilisation including transparency, agriculture, disaster and land travel. According to the EGA, this is fundamental data that will lead to the creation of a national data set.

The section "Transparent Thailand" on the EGA website works like a handbook for the public where users can access the government service information at the Government Contact Centre that contains all the information of 19 ministries. Users just type the topic that they want to be addressed. At present, the top three most searched topics on the website are tax, ID cards and driving licences. To facilitate interaction, users can also report problems, send feedback or complaints to responsible agencies.

On the "Thailand Government Spending" section, users can view the overall statistics of the government budget, such as the top 10 projects that are the highest cost, or top 10 provinces where the budget has been allocated.

"With this section, not just the public can view the information of where the nation's money is spent; the business sector can also learn where and when they should approach their products and services. It's a win-win," said the director.

EGA is now working with those organisations that are really the users of that data; for example, with Poh Teck Tung Foundation, Ruam Katanyu Foundation and the police on the issue of land travel.

"We would like to have community engagement so we have to work with those who really want to use the data, so that we can know their requirements," said Sak.

According to the EGA website, the data set that is most searched includes location and maps, household income, registered companies and basic data of education institutes.

In the meantime, the EGA will propose that the government consolidate the data centre among the ministries so that they can share resources. For agencies that are not ready to take care of their data centres, they are first recommended to outsource to the private sector.

"In future, all information will be in digital format, for example the e-payment system, so meeting a set standard is a must. EGA will set a framework to have the government agencies' data centres meet the standard," said Sak.

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