

The Importance of Digitalisation in Public Service

Speech by, Hanif Yusoof, Governor of the Western Province

ITRDA Seminar on the WPC Digitalisation Strategy

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Chairman, ITRDA, Secretaries, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Good morning.

I am pleased to address all of you at this critical seminar organised by the IT Resources Development Authority.

I want to begin by thanking each of you — the officials and public servants of the Western Provincial Council — for your continued dedication to public service, and for being here today to engage with one of the most important transitions in modern governance: the digital transformation of our country.

His Excellency President Anura Kumara Dissanayake has made it very clear: digitalisation is a national priority.

The President has placed the modernisation of public service at the heart of the Government's reform agenda.

His vision is a government that is efficient, transparent, accountable, and people-centric. A government where citizens can access services online, without delays, queues, or unnecessary paperwork. A government where public servants are empowered with tools, data, and systems to do their jobs more effectively.

As the Western Province — we are the most populous and economically significant province in the country — and therefore, we must lead this change.

We cannot afford to lag behind. The citizens we serve are already living digital lives. It is time the government caught up.

The old ways are no longer good enough. Citizens expect more — and they deserve more.

As your Governor, I also want to share with you my vision for the Western Province — and I am pleased to see this vision embedded into our Digitalisation Strategy.

My vision is for a digitally empowered provincial administration that is fast, transparent, responsive, and citizen-centric.

We must have a province where every service — from land registration to business licences — can be applied for and tracked online.

We must be the province where our public servants collaborate seamlessly with each other, with minimal paperwork and maximum accountability.

This must be the province where citizens can communicate directly with their government, raise concerns, provide feedback, and track progress in real time.

It should be the province where our decisions are data-driven, and our development is inclusive, efficient, and sustainable.

This vision is not a distant dream — it is a structured strategy. And every ministry, and department here today has a role to play in making it real.

[Digitalisation roadmap]

For that, I must thank the ITRDA and its Chairman, Mr. Wasantha Deshapriya, for helping us develop the Digitalisation Strategy for our province.

Mr. Chairman, through your collective efforts, we now have a clear and comprehensive roadmap to realise the vision of the President and of mine, as Governor. Thank you for your consistency and effort.

Today, I also want to announce the setting up of a new Digital Transformation Office for the Western Province.

This new Office will be lead by a Digital Leadership Team and supported by Digital Champions in every provincial Ministry and department that will coordinate and drive this transformation.

To the public servants here – I know that change can sometimes be daunting.

But, I want to ensure that none of you will be left behind in this journey that we have started.

I will ensure that everyone of you will be trained and empowered with the tools and knowledge needed to lead the change from within your own office, your own departments and your own Ministries.

But let me state one very immediate, symbolic, and practical reform that we can all do: **we must switch to email and paperless communication immediately.**

Paperless offices are the first act of a truly digital government.

To achieve that, I am directing all ministries and departments of the Western Provincial Council to use official email as the standard for form of communication.

If you don't have your official email, ITRDA will help set one up for you. A circular on this will be issued soon. This will automatically lead our transitioning toward digital records.

This will not only improve our efficiency, but it will enhance traceability, reduce costs, and signal to our citizens that we are serious about reform.

Colleagues, friends, digital transformation is not just a question of technology — it is a matter of leadership and attitude.

Everyone in this room has a smart phone. We are checking our Facebook, sending WhatsApp messages and communicating using digital devices everyday.

If we can use a smart phone, we can adopt email. If we can send messages to our friends and family online, we can do that with the citizens we serve too.

Colleagues - You are the engine of this government. This strategy cannot be implemented by consultants or external actors. It must be owned by you — the public servants of this province.

Many of you will be called upon to serve as **Digital Champions** within your organisations. I encourage you to take up that mantle. Be the bridge between your department and the future we are building.

I know that we can move from excuses to execution. And that our hesitance will soon turn to responsibility.

As Governor, I will personally chair a quarterly review committee to assess our progress.

Chairman, I want us to set KPIs to achieve these goals.

I want updates as to where we are in our roadmap to be made public.

And I want the successes of every office, department and Ministry in our province to be celebrated.

In closing, I want to be clear: this is the future of government. It is smarter, faster, cleaner, and more equitable. And it begins with each of us — here and now.

Let the Western Province be the first to fully realise the President's vision.

Let us build a digital government worthy of the 21st century.

Let us make our province a model for all others to follow.

Thank you — for your service, your leadership, and your belief in progress.

Let's get to work.

END OF SPEECH