

## ***Towards New Dimension of Parliamentary Libraries Cooperation in Asia Pacific***

(By Poltak Partogi Nainggolan\*)

**"A little support can work wonders"**

### **Abstract**

*Sejalan dengan perkembangan teknologi yang kian canggih, otomatisasi dan sistem yang terkait dalam suatu jaringan informasi, menjadi kebutuhan mendesak dan pokok pembicaraan dewasa ini, termasuk di parlemen. Karenanya, dalam Konperensi APLAP ke-4 di Canberra, Australia, hal tersebut telah dipilih menjadi tema pokok. Disadari, betapa penting dan strategisnya peran otomatisasi dan sistem yang terkait dalam jaringan informasi di DPR-RI, sebagai salah satu unsur sistem pendukung pangkalan data, bersama-sama dengan peran manusianya. Di sini dikemukakan berbagai masalah dalam sistem pendukung di parlemen dan alternatif solusi yang dikedepankan, melalui peningkatan kerjasama regional di Asia Pasifik, antara sistem pendukung dan mereka yang berperan di belakangnya. Yang patut diperhatikan juga adalah pembahasan relevansi antara kehadiran sistem yang terkait dengan demokratisasi yang tengah menggejala di seluruh dunia, seiring dengan globalisasi.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Today's rapid development of library services is marked by the using of electronic equipments in many aspects. A computerized system with a simple or more sophisticated technology has been introduced everywhere. The new approach of utilizing electronic equipments brings us to the new era which identified as globalization or an era of free flow of information.

There are so many hardwares and softwares offered by computer companies in exhibitions or televisions. Ten years ago library services

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still operated computers with limited capacity and speed, but now they have equipments which can store datas much more and can be operated faster. The personal computers such as XT, ET etc. and the softwares such as Wordstar, Wordperfect, Lotus etc. which were very popular in those years, become soon obsolete and are replaced by the next generation products like pentium and software Windows that can perform multi functions in more practical way. <sup>1)</sup>

Beside the facilities above, we have other choices to use CD-ROM/RAM, microfiche, canofile etc. to store datas effeciently and to keep them safely. Those facilities help us in solving the problems concerning the space in the library, and they make our jobs easier. In a short time, office automations and library facilities have developed quickly.<sup>2)</sup> And now we are in the era of internet with many providers offer us some options to superhighway access. Moreover, multimedia program to help library with digital system and electronic publishing as strategic elements of information infrastructure, are developing in advanced countries.<sup>3)</sup> As a result, some users in established libraries can easily decide what facilities they must buy and install, while the others are still confuse to choose the proper one.

### **DPR-RI'S DATABASE CONDITION**

Our parliamentary (DPR-RI) library has introduced electronic services in 1991. At the beginning, the library had 19 stations and operated an on-line system which called Local Area Network (LAN). There was only 1 server that had capacity about 500 megabites. From our computer centre room with 1 station in the library for the supervisor, this server was connected to 5 stations in the Center for Research and Information Services and to 13 stations in committees, including State Budget Committee, Household Committee and Committee for Inter-parliamentary Cooperation.

For its database, we used Inmagic 7.1 software to store datas and search it anytime we needed without having serious problem. This friendly software is actually a text base database that can perform library, archaives and documents functions. We can store datas to our database directly or with using other word processors. We can move datas from one station to another station and we can also update, change, add or delate the datas whenever we want. The information in this database

1) Personal computers revolution and the using of electronic mail (e-mail) have been indentified by Alfin Toffler as examples of fenomena of "the third wave" in his best seller book published in 1980, The Third Wave.

2) See "Menuju Era Perpustakaan Elektronik." Suara Pembaruan. 7 October 1996, p. 20.

3) Germany's government has allocated DM 1.9 milliard for developing library with digital system. See "Jerman ~tiakan 1,9 Miliar Mark Untuk Bangun Perpustakaan Digital." Suara Pembaruan. 15 August 1996, p. 3.

can be searched from various aspect, e.g. its keyword, title, subject or a brief background etc. Of course, we can print the information we found in Inmagic database.

After 3 years, the condition changed rapidly. Our parliamentary library, documentary and research section was officially united in a Center for Research and Information Services.<sup>4)</sup> We found that Inmagic database was not tolerable to support all members of parliament demands. So, we decide to install ISIS database for our library and research centre. ISIS 3.0 (Integrated Set of Information Systems) is used by us as full text, bibliografic and referral database. Like other softwares, searching for any information by ISIS can be done with the application of Boolean operator, truncation or proximity. If not all information keeping in index or inverted file, users can do free searching. As bibliografic database, the library itself has stored 16.000 titles of 40.000 books we have. The users of ISIS can be connected to users in any countries with internet CDS (Computerized Documentation System)/ISIS Mailing List. They can join discussion group through BITNET, JANET, EARN or any networks that have connections with internet. Through this network, users can issue news, asking advices or answering questions.

At the moment, our database has been completed with draft legislations and regulations, committee and research reports, correspondence and other documentary materials created in the course of our legislative activities. We maintain a searchable database of current Indonesia laws, committee proceedings, legislative research materials, recess, fact finding mission, committee hearings, meetings, seminars and other legislative events reports. Meanwhile, the information or research that not being met adequately for the members of parliament at present are: materials on international treaties and laws; information on technology, in particular trends and developments of new technology; information, library and field research on sensitive domestic economic and political issues, such as succession, national car policy, conflicts of interest among elites etc; information, library and field research on financial matters, especially dealing with intransparent project and funds which caused distortion, inefficiency and high cost economy; research on state (national) budget bill in order to give detailed figures and explanations to the members of parliament.

We manage other information products which are transferred from word processors WS, WP, Windows or Q-pro, SPSS etc. And we just installed a network facility which covers state budget issues only. Meanwhile, microfiche, CD-ROM and other non-on-line facilities are maintained.

4) Research requests are conducted today by 26 researchers from various disciplines. We have 5 divisions of researches, such as law, economic, social, domestic politic and international relations, and offer either library and field reseaches.

Thus, the database we offered are varies. Modem can be used to link our database with many sources of information, for instances National Statistical Bureau (BPS), Centre for Scientific Documentation and Information (PDI), Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI), newspapers, magazines, universities, government agencies databases, USIS, USIA and other foreign sources of information.

An on-line system of electronic services in our parliamentary library gives the users a direct and an equal access in committees, factions and secretariat general organs as well.<sup>5)</sup> All requests can be done by the members of parliament or their staffs from different places. The operators in our computer and research centre in the library, store the datas and update it everyday guided by research librarians and researchers. The supervisors always check regularly the condition of the hardwares and softwares whether they should be repaired or rehabilitated for the sake of giving uninterrupted electronic services. On the other hand, the Chiefs of Information Services make their evaluation to improve and give better services for the parliament.

To respond dramatically increased requests from our members of parliament, we added 1 new server in our computer centre room which had capacity about 540 megabites. For our electronic library services itself, we installed 3 new stations and 5 more for the research centre room. Furthermore, we enlarged our on-line network service to 4 factions in parliament and 1 station each for Proceeding Section, Special Committee and Bureau of Administration and Personnel in Secretariat General of parliament. Totally, our electronic services in library is now facilitated with 34 stations which have on-line connections with all committees, factions and the Secretariat General. And hardwares like desktop, HP laser Jet IV and scanner have equipped our parliament's computer network configuration.

Constructive development is still going on. Since 2 years ago, we have internet facility, although it must be accessed indirectly through The Board of Technological Research and Application (BPPT). Then, we got touchscreens which keep information on the titles of new books we bought, the orders of the day and other parliament's activities, the names and the rooms of the members of parliament etc. We installed it in some strategic places. Hopefully, in the new building which is now under construction, our electronic service will have multimedia information system that completed with motorized screen, video projector, parabola antennae, intranet etc.

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5) Indonesian parliament's supporting system adopts a shared central resource for information. It is an appropriate model for our parliamentary services, because its accessibility. All committees and factions can access to the databases we provided. The members of parliament can have equal and fair services without linking their position to majority or minority in parliament.

## VARIETY PROBLEMS

Unlike advanced countries, generally developing countries have financial problems dealing with providing electronic services. It must be admitted that the establishment of electronic services in our parliamentary library from the beginning could be done with the aid from our colleagues in The Asia Foundation. This foundation has helped us in equipping our information services with servers, personal computers, printers, copy machines etc.

Even at the early years, when our own fund was not enough, The Asia Foundation lent us their office automations. We got also computer experts and researchers who worked as consultants to develop our parliamentary library electronic services. Later came the aid from Germany's foundation, that is Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, which give us its fund until today to provide new equipments and to train our computer operators, librarians and reseachers.

In general, the problem in human resources planning and development we faced is mutation and how to put the right man in the right place. Next, because of the fast development of hardwares and softwares, we have the problem on further education and trainings for the people who involve in information services. And to exchange our library products and publications with other parliamentary libraries, specifically we have problem in translation from Indonesian language to English. Frankly speaking, we need translators to publish our publications in english.

We need also more modem equipments to link our database services with other parliamentary libraries and we should establish our homepage which covers many parliamentary products and information. It is a fact, that until today we do not have an independent e-mail address and every e-mail must be sended through BPPT e-mail address because our internet facility is a gift from BPPT (a governmental agency for technological research and application).<sup>6)</sup> We do not have a sophisticated, fast and good quality internet facility. We know that we have difficulties in increasing electronic service facilities and equipments with our own fund.

Perhaps we remember the terminology of "garbage in garbage out" to explain the existence of computer as a tool that must be operated by human beings. That is why, brainwares play strategic role in electronic services. Without them, our computers can not work well and store only useless datas. As a consequence, human resources should get good attention to develop.

The more sophisticated hardwares and softwares produced, the more

6) Our tentative e-mail address is [WWW.yanti.go.id](http://WWW.yanti.go.id) or [WWW.sondang.go.id](http://WWW.sondang.go.id) or [WWW.toyo.go.id](http://WWW.toyo.go.id).

problems with human resources development we had. Sometimes we confuse to choose suitable hardwares or softwares to be bought and installed because of the fast developing technology recently. Sure, knowledge gap has brought about barriers in giving electronic services for our parliament. For example, because of technical problems, we have ever lost our important datas, both textual and bibliographic.

Sometimes, limited knowledge and skill of the operators is worsened by poor planning in mutation. Once, some of the employees in our parliamentary library were reassigned to new posts in other part of Secretariat General Office which had no relevance with library services, their knowledges and skills. That means a waste of time and money, while we still need more equipments and must establish our homepage and own e-mail address to increase our electronic services.

We are aware that the need to facilitate our electronic services with multimedia equipments in the long run will face also human resources problems. Professional management which must be given to meet the demands of the members of parliament will need suitably qualified librarians. Since users need training to keep them in touch with the development of new technology, the usage of sophisticated equipments in our library should be implemented in the right time.

### **EARLY COOPERATION**

The embryo of cooperation among parliamentary libraries in the Asia Pacific region have been formed in 1990 by the founding of Association of Parliamentary Librarians of Asia and the Pacific (APLAP). But bilaterally, it has been done in our parliamentary library ten years before, especially with the USA. We have built contacts with Library of Congress by training our parliament staffs or researchers there or receiving regular visits from US Congress staffs. We shared information by doing intense discussions. And through the help of The Asia Foundation, we got new books and Library of Congress or Congressional Research Services publications.

If we need certain laws or bills which have passed or have been discussing in US Congress, we will ask US Embassy officials (either USIS, Zorinsky Memorial Library or Representatives of Library of Congress in Jakarta) by letter, phone or visit its office. They keep their datas in indirect facilities, for instances CD-ROM and microfiche, and direct facilities linked by internet or the so called sophisticated Legi-slate program. In the near future, we hope that we should not come to US Embassy to have all information we needed if on-line electronic services between US Congress and Indonesian parliament has been established.

It means we save time and money in serving the parliament.

The same cases were found in our bilateral relations with France, Germany, Japan and Australia. We must contact or visit their Embassies to get information from their parliament or government. In our perspective, an on-line system among parliamentary libraries, at least in Asia Pacific region, must be built to cope with the fast increasing needs in the era of free trade. We can not tolerate again indirect or non-automatic service since it takes time, has bureaucratic constraints and expensive cost.

On the other side, our parliamentary library bilateral relations with ASEAN countries become stronger because of the AIPO (ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Organization) activities. We know that each country in Asia Pacific has different condition and development, particularly in its library supporting system, with regard to its budget support and human resources problems. However, poorer facilities and limited service can be improved by strengthening cooperation among us, not only bilaterally, but also regionally. The instinct to help each other will motivate us to increase regional cooperation among parliamentary librarians in compliance with more conducive situation existed at the moment.

### **ON-LINE SYSTEM AND DEMOCRACY**

We are sure that the coming of information era promise a better government in the future. The positive impacts of on-line system will potentially improve democracy.<sup>7)</sup> Personal computers which are connected in an interactive network will strengthen the level of participation of the people in democratic process and civil affairs because of accessibility in many sectors. Fundamental political debates and dialogues will develop well if people have access to public information and can interact electronically with government agency and parliament vice versa.

We know that public policy needs often bargains. And internet is the first media which will make the people easily to investigate and participate in our today's problems.<sup>8)</sup> Obviously, it will give the people possibilities to exchange their views or opinions. In other words, internet will strengthen democracy by providing many accesses to the people who want to know about an issue they needed.<sup>9)</sup>

7) See Bill Gates, "Pemerintahan yang Lebih Baik? Pasti Terjadi dalam Era Informasi," Kompas, 1 September 1996, p.9

8) The actual issue on the existence and importance of internet and its problems, see for example, "Owning Facts," International Herald Tribune, 4 November 1996, p.6.

9) See Gates, *loc.cit.*

We can say that the existence of internet has solved the question of monopoly of information.<sup>10)</sup> If previously the government is the main sources of information in which most of them have never reached for the people, even to the people who are very concern with such information, now is the situation changing. Internet gives the people possibilities to get information from the government and parliament equally.<sup>11)</sup> Election or voting that can be increased by the supporting of internet is one important example.

Through this facility, the people can evaluate what the candidates in their campaigns or programs said. The people can see the candidates' speeches and can survey the candidates' supporters and recommendations they got from non-partisan groups. Even the people can discuss to whom they should give their votes. For this reason, it is now the time for us to establish electronic services in parliamentary libraries by linking an on-line database system among the countries in Asia Pacific.

We can build an efficient and responsive government in which personal computers, internet and other electronic services will play important role to create a better civil society, especially in developing countries, and to motivate political communications and dialogues all over the world.<sup>12)</sup> Although the challenges will come from authoritarian regimes that does not like dissemination of information and openness as the positive impacts of globalization, cooperation among parliamentary librarians and reseachers, and moral commitment to help each other in building a better democratic system, must be strengthened.<sup>13)</sup> Such cooperation could help hindering the danger of the clash of civilization as predicted by some futurulogs recently.<sup>14)</sup>

To implement the ideas above, there are some agendas to be done. Firstly, let us establish our homepages which cover all important information like national laws and bills, orders of the day (parliament activities agenda), proceedings, rules of procedures, books, periodicals, maga-

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10) The effort to make "creative" and "value-added" databases will raise another question, namely intellectual property right that will be discussed in an international conference on this December 1996 in Geneva. See "Owning Facts," *loc.cit.*

11) Gates, *loc.cit.*

12) *Ibid.*

13) Many developing countries have problems with censorship of press, both for printing and electronic media. Probably, in the coming years the same case will be faced by "interactive media" or internet service in ASEAN states. The question for us is how to avoid the free flow of information from censorship which hindered us from getting accurate, objective and complete information we needed. The same concern has emerged in US Congress and became an interesting editorial, see "Electronic Information," *International Herald Tribune*, 7-8 September 1996, p. 3.

14. The most influence one is the work of Prof. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilization and the Remaking of World Order*, 1995. See also Toffler, *op.cit.*



zines, newspapers and other materials related to parliament's need.<sup>15)</sup> Secondly, let us establish our electronic mail (e-mail) addressess and start making contact regularly.<sup>16)</sup> We can begin with the simple one such as giving the information on the arrival of parliamentary visit, the names of the members of delegation, the aims of the visit, the latest development of what in our own parliament happened and so forth, by sending e-mail.

It is a good news that Indonesia is now becoming a member of main internet networks in Asia Pacific.<sup>17)</sup> So, all international service users can send their datas faster with low pulsa cost only. This has been made possible through channeling Indonesia to Asia Pacific Backbone by Radnet provider in Japan, Hong Kong and Singapore. In the short run, we hope that the network which has linked Australia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Japan and Indonesia will be broadened and covers also Taiwan, South Korea, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines, China, India and other Asia Pacific countries.

### **THE NEED FOR STRONGER COOPERATION**

In our opinion, up to now the existing cooperation does not help much. Because an on-line system between parliamentary libraries has not yet established. We can access only to certain parliamentary libraries, especially in developed countries like US Congress, Germany's Bundestag etc. We got microfiches from Australian and Japan Parliament but until now there is no request for that from our members of parliament. We think, the more useful and practical way to give a quick reference material is by using internet service and facility. The basic and general information provided in internet is adequate. Nevertheless, we should complete the homepages or newsgroups with more detailed information of parliamentary products and publications in order to give the members of parliament better service. On the other side, manual or printing publications which we got from other parliamentary libraries have not been regularly sended to us and has not been appropriate and adequate. In fact, we need regular publications which cover current legal materials or any laws which just passed in other parliaments as comparative materi-

15) We agree if the homepages or newsgroups must cover key or basic information resources. But it will be better if it covers also other information like what has happened recently in parliament, the composition and the names of the chairmen of the parliament, bills which are being discussed and laws which has just passed in the plenary meeting, the next national election etc.

16) The urgent need of e-mail has been anticipated by Toffler in 1980's. He predicted the using of e-mail will sharply increase in the decade ahead. So, we are now entering the era of "third wave." See Toffler, *op.cit.*

17) See "Indonesia Masuk Jaringan Utama Internet Asia Pasifik," *Pelita*, 30 August 1996, p. 2. See also "Indonesia Masuk Jaringan Utama Internet Asia Pasifik," *Suara Karya*, 30 August 1996, p. 10.

als to our members of parliament that will be useful in helping them to review the same bill.

As we mentioned before, our parliamentary library has cooperation directly or indirectly with some domestic and international institutions and parliamentary libraries, including Indonesian National Library, University of Indonesia, World Bank and United Nations. We receive regularly their products and publications. From foreign parliamentary libraries we still get their products and publications too, e.g. from National Assemblée of France, Germany's Bundestag and Inter-nation, Library of Congress through its Representative in Jakarta, Japan Parliament (including microfiche), Australian Parliament (including microfiche) etc. That is the current level of cooperation of our parliamentary library with other national and international libraries and institutions.

Of course, there are further benefits which could be achieved through improved cooperation with other parliamentary libraries, especially in providing comparative materials and studies for our members of parliament in bills review. We believe any information about other parliaments are always important and give benefits or advantages for increasing interparliamentary cooperation, either bilaterally or multilaterally. And we see that interlibrary cooperation can be improved, but at first we should have some priorities, namely:

1. To develop more contacts and communications among parliamentary librarians through manual and electronic correspondences (by air mail, facsimile, internet etc.);
2. To increase exchanges of products and publications;
3. To establish an on-line system through internet or by using modem equipments;<sup>18)</sup>
4. To establish our own e-mail addresses and homepages in internet;<sup>19)</sup>
5. To exchange datas by using electronic services, particularly datas on current political, economic and social issues, for instances APEC, AFTA, AIDS, enviromental problems, etc;
6. To increase comparative studies and exchanges of librarians and researchers;
7. To increase seminars, workshops or trainings home and abroad;

18) We have proposed to establish an on-line computer network system among parliaments of the world or members of IPU (Inter-Parliamentary Union) 3 years ago in *Le seminaire d'information sur le role et la fonction de l'Union Interparlementaire* (Seminar on the Role and Function of the IPU) held in Geneva, 1-11 November 1993. We see this idea is still relevant today and the cooperation among parliaments of the world will be effective and effecient if we can maké it happened, because, because it will give many advantages for them, including APLAP members.

19) A brief information on internet, e-mail adress, homepage and how to search for and choose information needed easily, see "Informasi Tumpahnya, Diperlukan Kiat Menyadap dan Menyerap," Suara Karya, 14 October 1996, p. 7.

8. To publish a scientific journal (APLAP Journal) which receives articles or writings of APLAP members and channels their ideas and opinions in analysis form.

Through developing contacts and communications by any means and increasing the quality of cooperation, APLAP may improved the level of cooperation among members.<sup>20)</sup> And concerning with the difference or diverse problems of APLAP members, we should help each others. Financial, technical or educational assistances from developed countries or foreign foundations still needed for establishing electronically services.<sup>21)</sup> Furthermore, APLAP should have its permanent secretariat.<sup>22)</sup> The office of the permanent secretariat could be decided by deliberations of the APLAP members in general meeting.

In conclusion, establishing an on-line system of our parliamentary services will make better understanding among governments, parliaments and nations, and will bridge communication gap among the countries in Asia Pacific that in turn could contribute to filling other gaps which still exist. It is a real challenge for the next 5th APLAP's Biennial Conference which has been planned to be held in Manila, the Philippines, in 1998, by the recent conference in Camberra, Australia.

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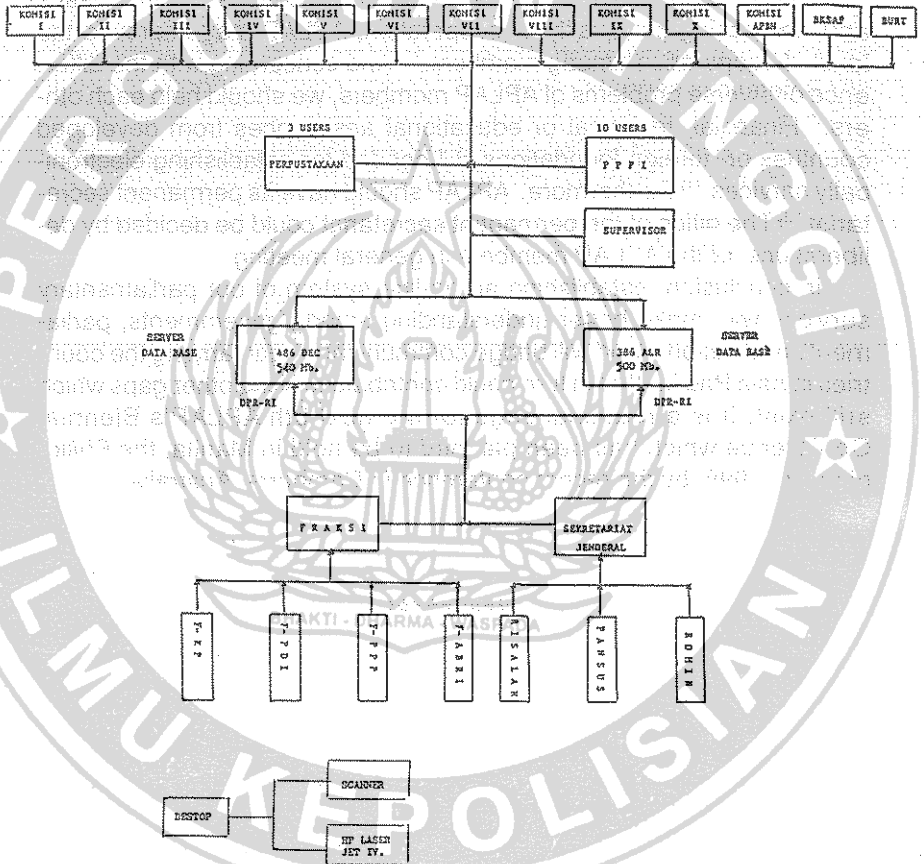
20) We absolutely agree with the idea to improve communication through a monitored newsgroup or other means. But it must be followed up not only by electronic services (internet etc.) but also by exchanging parliamentary library products and publications.

21) Prior to providing equipments and facilities, surely aid program for advocacy, expertise or feasibility study must be given to the countries needed.

22) To accomodate a fast increasing communication and activities among APLAP members in the future, what we really need is more than a strong secretariat. Some possibilities for APLAP permanent secretariat are: in Bangkok where IFLA regional office situated, in Jakarta where ASEAN and AIPO permanent secretariat located, in Manila which has strong parliament supporting system and many NGO's, etc. In permanent secretariat can be further discussed the efforts to make the existing regional cooperation of APLAP become more effective; the general and specific problems and challenges that always faced by the members of APLAP; the efforts to develop relations with other regional and international organizations like APEC, AFTA, ASEAN, Asia Pasific Parliamentary Forum IFLA etc.

# APPENDIX I

## CONFIGURATION OF DPR-RI'S COMPUTER NETWORK SYSTEM



## APPENDIX II

## INFORMATION SERVICES

### INFORMATION SERVICES IN DPR-RI

- Clippings of various domestic and international newspapers and magazines
- Computerized catalogs
- References services
- Weekly Report (various issues in brief)
- Info Packages (certain important and hot topic issues in brief)
- In-depth Analyses on certain critical issues
- National budget policy datas and figures
- Various national and international issues databases
- Abstracts of national laws
- Orders of the Day (parliament daily activities or agenda)
- Library and field-researches on certain issues as requested by the members of parliament
- Plenary and committees reports and proceedings
- Resumes and complete reports of seminars and conferences held in parliament
- Analyses of laws and bills
- List of questions for members of parliament for hearing with government officials
- Analyses' of people problems and complaints
- Materials for members of parliament in friendly talks with foreign parliamentarians (parliamentary bilateral cooperation groups)
- Translation services in Indonesian, English and French languages
- Scientific research journal and articles publications in magazines and newspapers
- Seminars and conferences organizing services
- Speeches writing services

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