

Broadcasting Authority imposes financial penalty on CR

The Broadcasting Authority (BA) today (June 15) announced that a financial penalty of \$140,000 would be imposed on Hong Kong Commercial Broadcasting Company Limited (CR) for its contravention of the Radio Code of Practice on Programme Standards in regards to its radio programme “So Fab”.

Moreover, in view of the seriousness of the case and wide public concern about the programme, the BA invoked section 25A of the Broadcasting Authority Ordinance (Cap. 391) for the first time to direct CR to include in its sound broadcasting service an apology regarding the complaints. The apology should be broadcast once in all three channels of CR during the prime time by a senior member of CR’s management.

To prevent the occurrence of incidents of similar nature, the BA has also directed CR to submit, within three months of the final decision of the BA and to the satisfaction of the BA, a progress report on their remedial measures taken. The BA will scrutinise the report carefully to ensure that CR will adopt a more proactive and tighter monitoring system for its programmes in future.

The Broadcasting Authority (BA) has so far received 189 complaints against the promotion of an Internet poll “the Hong Kong female artiste whom I most want to indecently assault” in the radio programme “So Fab” broadcast on the CR2 channel of CR on June 3, 2006 from 12:00 midnight to 2:00 am. The BA has carefully considered the content of the programme concerned and decided that the complaints were substantiated.

The BA considered that the programme concerned was found to be in breach of paragraphs 6, 7(a) and (b), 8, 9, 16, 17 and 19 of the BA’s Radio Programme Code. In coming to this decision, the BA considered that the programme presenters concerned were experienced programme hosts and the promotion of the poll in CR’s programme was not a matter of inadvertence. The BA was of the view that as indecent assault involved sexual violence and was a criminal offence by nature, the

programme hosts' remarks to ask listeners to vote for the female artistes they most wanted to indecently assault was of bad taste.

Moreover, the light-hearted manner in which the hosts dealt with the subject gave listeners the wrong impression that the act of indecent assault was trivial and could be made fun of. The frivolous and insensitive treatment of such improper conduct and of what could amount to a criminal act could well be considered as denigrating and insulting to women. The programme also gave listeners the incorrect impression that it was acceptable behaviour to contemplate the idea of indecently assaulting a woman.

The BA was of the view that CR2 was a channel targeting teenagers and young people and as such there might be teenagers staying up late at night listening to the programme. The invitation made by the programme hosts to listeners to vote on such an improper subject could not be considered as appropriate even if the programme was broadcast at midnight.

As this is the second occasion which a financial penalty is imposed on CR and having regard to the proposed remedial measures to be taken by CR, including training sessions for their staff to enhance their professionalism and sense of responsibility towards the society, the BA decided to impose a financial penalty of \$140,000.

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