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Report on review of public service broadcasting submitted (with video)

The following is issued on behalf of the Committee on Review of Public Service Broadcasting:

The Committee on Review of Public Service Broadcasting submitted its Report to the Chief Executive today (March 28).

The Chairman of the Committee, Mr Raymond R Wong said that after months of thorough review, research, consultations and deliberations, the committee had concluded that there was a genuine need for PSB in Hong Kong.

"The landscape of local broadcasting will continue to change as a result of digitisation and further development of multimedia technologies. These changes will enhance rather than diminish the social responsibility and value of PSB," Mr Wong said. "There will be a greater and more pronounced public demand for PSB as the audience looks to it as a credible source of accurate and impartial information, educational inspirations and resources, as well as quality entertainment and enlightenment."

Having reviewed Hong Kong's current broadcasting scene, the committee recommends in its report that a new public broadcaster be constituted as a statutory body and funded primarily from the public purse to provide PSB that is genuinely universal, diverse, independent and distinctive. It proposes that this newly minted public broadcaster be named the Hong Kong Public Broadcasting Corporation (PBC).

"The PBC should be independent in its editorial and programming decisions. Its board, management and rank-and-file should exercise freedom of speech and of the press responsibly.

"It should operate under stringent governance and accountability measures. And it must be answerable to the public for the scope and quality of services it provides, and the public money it expends," Mr Wong said.

The report recommends that the PBC should be tasked to fulfil four specific public purposes. First, it should sustain citizenship and civil society. PSB in Hong Kong should promote understanding of our community, our nation and the world through accurate and impartial news, information, perspectives and analyses. It should promote understanding of the concept of "One Country, Two Systems" and its implementation. And it should provide an open platform for exchange of views.

Secondly, it should foster social harmony and promote pluralism. PSB should seek to enhance public understanding and acceptance of the cultural, linguistic, religious and ethnic diversity both in the local community and beyond through the diversity of its programme coverage, universality of reach, and sensitivity to the pluralistic nature of Hong Kong and the world.

Thirdly, it should establish education value and promote lifelong learning. This can be achieved by stimulating interest

in a full range of subjects, and providing information and resources to facilitate learning at all levels and for all ages.

Lastly, it should stimulate creativity and excellence to enrich the multi-cultural life of the people of Hong Kong. It should produce, commission or acquire for broadcast distinctive and original content; it should actively promote public interest, engagement and participation in cultural activities; and its programming and other corporate policies and practices should foster creativity and nurture talent.

“To deliver on all these fronts, it is important for PSB to follow closely the development of multimedia, and take the lead when necessary to ensure delivery of quality programmes through as many platforms as possible, serving as wide an audience as possible.

“Therefore, the committee proposes that the PBC should operate on digital platform and run at least one free television channel to provide Cantonese, English and Putonghua programmes; operate a sufficient number of radio, especially FM, channels; and develop multimedia services.

“The committee recognises that its recommendations, if implemented, will herald significant changes to the local broadcasting scene. We believe that, if done well, PSB will enrich Hong Kong's social and cultural tapestry, create a better balance in the local media ecology and contribute to the long-term development of a thriving broadcasting industry. It will also broaden the regional and international perspective of the people, and contribute to Hong Kong's overall competitiveness,” Mr Wong said.

The committee was appointed last January to review and determine the role of public service broadcasting (PSB), if any, in Hong Kong. Should PSB be deemed necessary, the committee was to recommend ways and means of how PSB might best serve the people of Hong Kong.

During the review, the committee met legislators, commercial broadcasters and other media executives, management and staff representatives from Radio Television Hong Kong, academics, various special interest and social concern groups as well as overseas PSB experts. Many more expressed their views in writing, either by mail to the committee or by accessing the committee's website.

“We are grateful to the hundreds of people, both here and abroad, who have generously shared their wise counsel, insight, experiences, expertise and candour. In particular, we would like to thank members of the four Focus Groups set up by the committee. They made important contributions to the formulation of proposals regarding governance structure, accountability measures, funding arrangements and programming.

“We understand that the Government will consider the report of the committee in detail and consult the public. We encourage the public to take part and help shape the future of Hong Kong's PSB,” Mr Wong said.

The detailed proposals, justifications and other options considered by the committee have been set out in the report, which is available online at the website of the Commerce,

Industry and Technology Bureau:

<http://www.citb.gov.hk/ctb/eng/new/pr28032007.htm>. To facilitate public consumption, a summary of recommendations is attached.

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