

The Civic Party wishes to present its views on the Report on Review of Public Service Broadcasting (PSB), as follows:

1. We object strongly to the Report for its unjustified elimination of the possibility of transforming and reconstituting Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) as a public broadcaster under the proposed new structure (sections 90, 96), for such pre-mature exclusion leads easily to the speculation of a hidden agenda to "kill RTHK".

RTHK is a unique Hong Kong brand name with close to eighty years of operation. In view of the substantial credibility it has built up in local broadcasting history, any attempt to leave RTHK out of the proposed PSB development would be unreasonable and inconceivable.

According to the Report (sections 66, 88, 90), it is not desirable to transform RTHK into the new public broadcaster because as a government department RTHK carries with it "an entrenched structure, elaborated internal codes and a strong corporate governance". We see little logic in this argument. For it would be natural to think that, in order to improve and upgrade RTHK for PSB, Government should release it of its official status. Will it not be logical to think that RTHK can actually work better as a reconstituted public broadcaster when it becomes independent of government structure? Will this not save much public money, and help maintain social harmony by also saving the public from having to deal with the controversy over the status of RTHK? Just why are the problems involved in doing this so "insurmountable" (section 96) The Report offers no convincing answer.

2. Any PSB in Hong Kong is not and should not be made a government mouthpiece. We strongly object to any intention to turn RTHK, which has since the mid-1970's been playing the quasi role of Hong Kong's public broadcaster, into a government mouthpiece.

3. We are also deeply concerned whether the new PSB structure suggested in the Report can effectively defend freedom of press, freedom of speech, and editorial autonomy in Hong Kong, for the following reasons:

a. The Report proposes that the Chairman and members of the Board are to be appointed in their personal capacity by the Chief Executive (section 134). Though it suggests that members are to be drawn from a number of relevant sectors, they will not serve as representatives of their respective sectors (section 124, 125), thus making

their entire nomination a mere cosmetic process.

b. The person whom the Board will appoint as the CEO of the public broadcaster will function effectively as its Chief Editor (section 122), who might under such condition be obliged to succumb to the will of the Chief Executive-appointed Board.

c. According to the Report (section 74b), one aim of the PSB is to promote understanding of “One Country, Two Systems” and its implementation. This could effectively become the excuse for the new public broadcaster to put itself fully at the service of the HKSAR administration, since the implementation of the “One Country, Two Systems” is largely considered to be Government’s task. We are concerned that the vague and general statement of such an aim would lead unnecessarily to public anxiety over the PSB turning into a variant of Government Service Broadcasting instead.

In view of the above, the Civic Party urges Government to allow ample time to conduct a genuine and comprehensive consultation to collect views from the people on the Report. We believe listening to what the people have to say is a key to building a genuinely harmonious society in Hong Kong.

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