

立法會
Legislative Council

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Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting

Minutes of special meeting
held on Friday, 15 October 2010, at 9:30 am
in the Chamber of the Legislative Council Building

- Members present** : Hon WONG Yuk-man (Chairman)
Dr Hon Samson TAM Wai-ho, JP (Deputy
Chairman)
Hon CHAN Kam-lam, SBS, JP
Hon LAU Kong-wah, JP
Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP
Hon LEE Wing-tat
Hon Andrew LEUNG Kwan-yuen, GBS, JP
Hon WONG Ting-kwong, BBS, JP
Hon Ronny TONG Ka-wah, SC
Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan
Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-ye, GBS, JP
- Member attending** : Hon WONG Kwok-hing, MH
- Members absent** : Hon Timothy FOK Tsun-ting, GBS, JP
Hon IP Kwok-him, GBS, JP
- Public officers attending** : Mrs Rita LAU, JP
Secretary for Commerce and Economic
Development

Mr Gregory SO, JP
Under Secretary for Commerce and Economic
Development

Miss Elizabeth TSE, JP
Permanent Secretary for Commerce and Economic
Development (Communications and Technology)

Mr Alan SIU, JP
Deputy Secretary for Commerce and Economic
Development (Communications and Technology)

Mr Jeremy GODFREY
Government Chief Information Officer

Mr HA Yung-kuen
Acting Director-General of Telecommunications

Clerk in attendance : Ms YUE Tin-po
Chief Council Secretary (1)3

Staff in attendance : Ms Annette LAM
Senior Council Secretary (1)3

Ms May LEUNG
Legislative Assistant (1)6

Action

I. Briefing by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development on relevant policy initiatives featuring in the Chief Executive's 2010-2011 Policy Address

(LC Paper No. CB(1)18/10-11(01) -- Administration's paper on policy initiatives of Communications and Technology Branch, Commerce and Economic Development Bureau

LC Paper No. CB(1)64/10-11(01) -- Speaking note of the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development)
(*tabled at the meeting and subsequently issued on 18 October*)

2010)

Other relevant documents

- (a) Address by the Chief Executive at the Legislative Council meeting on 13 October 2010 - "Sharing Prosperity for a Caring Society" (*issued on 13 October 2010*); and
- (b) The 2010-2011 Policy Address - "Policy Agenda" (*issued on 13 October 2010*).

Briefing by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development

At the invitation of the Chairman, the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development (SCED) briefed members on the major initiatives relating to the Communications and Technology Branch of the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau under the 2010 Policy Address and Policy Agenda. These included initiatives in the areas of broadcasting services, telecommunications, creative industries and information technology. Details of the policy initiatives were set out in the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(1)18/10-11(01) and SCED's speaking note (LC Paper No. CB(1)64/10-11(01)).

Discussion

Digital inclusion initiatives for the underprivileged

2. Mr WONG Kwok-hing referred to the Government digital inclusion initiatives for the underprivileged, and enquired about the progress of the five-year programme to facilitate on-line learning of students from needy families at home, and the implementation of the dedicated portal ("eElderly") for the elderly.

3. SCED said that in order to mitigate the impact of digital divide on the quality of learning, the Finance Committee (FC) had approved in May 2010 a funding provision of \$220 million to implement a five-year programme to help primary and secondary students from low-income families to acquire affordable and suitable computers and Internet access for on-line learning at home. Students and their parents would be provided with complementary training and technical support on safe and healthy use of the Internet. Interested non-profit organizations were invited to submit implementation proposals in May 2010. The Administration was still evaluating the

proposals and expected the selected organizations to launch the services as soon as possible before the start of the 2011-2012 school year. The Administration would update the Panel of the progress in due course.

4. On the dedicated portal for the elderly, the Government Chief Information Officer (GCIO) said that out of the six proposals received, the Hong Kong Society for the Aged had been selected to lead the development of the Portal. The purpose of the Portal, launched in June 2010, was to provide convenient one-stop information service on elderly services and the silver hair market information so as to enhance the elderly's access to the rich pool of online information and services and also to expand their life circle through the Internet. The information provided was mainly centered around the interests of the elderly, such as those related to their daily lives, medical and health, housing and care, life-long learning, social and recreational activities. The Administration would update the Panel on the progress of the Portal after it had operated for some time.

New initiatives of Radio Television Hong Kong

5. On the future development of the Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK), Mr LEE Wing-tat was concerned whether RTHK would be provided with sufficient resources to implement new initiatives, particularly in launching digital audio broadcasting (DAB) and facilitating community participation in broadcasting. Sharing a similar concern, Mr Ronny TONG urged the Administration to provide RTHK with more resources and flexibility to enable it to compete with commercial broadcasters.

6. SCED assured members that RTHK would be allocated resources and frequency spectrum in accordance with the Government's established resource allocation mechanism to enhance its operation and expand its scope of service, including the provision of digital television and radio channels for use as a platform for community participation in broadcasting.

7. Ms Cyd HO said that RTHK's rich archive of audiovisual materials and the Hong Kong Film Archive (HKFA)'s collection of legacy movie titles were both of significant historical value that should be preserved for the collective memory of Hong Kong. She urged the Government to provide the necessary manpower and funding to expedite the conservation of the archives of RTHK and the HKFA.

8. SCED replied that plans were underway to digitize RTHK programmes and materials. The Administration was working closely with RTHK to examine the digitization and the safekeeping of its audiovisual materials as well as the associated manpower and financial implications.

Enhancing community participation in broadcasting

9. Noting that some RTHK channels had co-run the same programme during night time, Mr LEE Wing-tat urged the Administration to consider releasing more airtime and opening up more airwaves for social/ethnic/religious groups, non-governmental organizations and different sectors of the community to participate in community broadcasting so that frequency spectrum as a scarce public resource would be put to optimum use in the interest of plurality of public voices.

10. SCED said that in line with the Government's general mission to foster freedom of expression and encourage a plurality of voices in the community, part of RTHK's airtime and resources within the scope of its digital services development would be set aside for the purpose of providing a platform for community participation in broadcasting. Community groups could produce their own programmes on specific themes or topics for broadcast on RTHK's channels. To facilitate community participation in broadcasting and content production, community groups would be provided with financial and technical support through the Community Broadcasting Involvement Fund administered by RTHK.

11. Mr LEE Wing-tat enquired about the principles and mechanism for allocating time-slots and funding to community groups under the Community Broadcasting Involvement Fund. As the ultimate editorial responsibility of RTHK rested with the Director of Broadcasting, Mr LEE expressed concern about the editorial independence of the programmes produced by the community groups for broadcast on RTHK's channels.

12. SCED replied that the newly set up Board of Advisors would advise the RTHK management on matters pertaining to editorial policy, programme standard, as well as matters relating to community participation in broadcasting, including the rules for the distribution of the new Community Broadcasting Involvement Fund. She assured members that RTHK, as a Government department, had to comply with the Producers' Guidelines and the relevant codes of practices issued by the Broadcasting Authority (BA), and subject to these parameters, it would not interfere with the editorial independence of the programmes produced by independent community groups. She highlighted that there was no pre-censorship in Hong Kong. The role of RTHK was to provide financial and technical assistance to facilitate community participation in broadcasting through the Community Broadcasting Involvement Fund. Due respect would be accorded to the content of the original programmes produced by community groups.

13. Ms Emily LAU referred to the applications from big conglomerates for DAB service and domestic free television programme service licences, and expressed disappointment about the lack of platforms for smaller community groups with less financial means to express their views. As digitization would free up additional frequency spectrum, she enquired whether the Administration would consider lowering the financial threshold so that financially less affluent groups could also have the opportunity to participate in community broadcasting. She urged the Administration to expedite the opening up of airwaves to allow more room for small community groups and different sectors of the community to operate their own radio and TV channels.

14. Mr Ronny TONG said that with the launch of DAB and the additional frequency spectrum to be freed up by digitization, the Government should seriously consider allowing more community participation in broadcasting and engaging the public in the discussion of social policy issues and public concerns. He called on the Administration to draw up detailed plan and timetable for opening up airwaves for community broadcasting.

15. The Chairman said that to promote free flow of information and freedom of expression, the Administration should adopt a more open attitude towards opening up airwaves to facilitate expression of different views and to encourage a plurality of voices.

16. In response, SCED said that the Administration had been taking a market-driven approach in respect of the development of DAB in Hong Kong and encouraged competition to provide a wide variety of radio programmes choices to consumers through DAB. She highlighted that the current licensing regime in Hong Kong was open, fair and transparent, and all the factors that would be taken into consideration were stipulated clearly in relevant ordinances. She further said that there was no pre-set limit on the number of licences to be granted. The criteria on financial soundness had not specified the level of financial resources required other than stating that the applicant must demonstrate a commitment to invest sufficiently in the proposed project and possessed sufficient financial capacity to invest to the level proposed.

17. As regards public engagement, SCED said that to enhance the Government's interface with the public and the effectiveness of Government's e-engagement initiatives, efforts would be made to facilitate the adoption of Web 2.0 technology by bureaux and departments in their e-engagement exercises. Social media applications (e.g. online questionnaires and live video streaming) would also be developed for bureaux and departments to deploy in their e-engagement exercises.

Promoting the development of creative industries

18. Mr LEE Wing-tat noted that a large-scale music showcase featuring top music artistes in Asia and an Asian TV awards presentation would be sponsored by the Create Hong Kong (CreateHK). While he appreciated that these signature events would help promote Hong Kong in the international arena, he urged the Administration to draw up more long-term policies to drive the development of creative economy in Hong Kong. He sought information on other concrete initiatives undertaken by CreateHK to support local creative industries and promote the development of creative industries in Hong Kong.

19. The Permanent Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development (Communications and Technology) (PSCED(CT)) replied that creative industries were important economic drivers for Hong Kong, and it had been the Government's policy to foster a conducive environment to facilitate creative industries development in Hong Kong and to build Hong Kong into a regional creative capital. With the establishment of the CreateHK and the \$300 million CreateSmart Initiative (CSI) in June 2009, the Government had promulgated a seven-pronged strategy to provide a clear strategic direction for the development of local creative industries. These strategic areas included, among other things, nurturing a pool of creative human capital, facilitating start-ups and development of creative establishments, promoting creative industries on the Mainland and overseas to help explore outside markets, and fostering a creative atmosphere within the community. Projects initiated by different sectors of the creative industries (namely, film, design, music, television, advertising, architecture, publishing, comics and animation, and digital entertainment) that were conducive to the development of the local creative industries and in line with the seven-pronged strategic direction would be funded under various funding schemes, such as the Film Development Fund (FDF), the Film Guarantee Fund, the DesignSmart Initiative and the CSI administered by the CreateHK. On nurturing creative human capital, sponsorship had been provided for talented youths and students to participate in overseas exchange programmes, international creative competitions, and internship programme. Through Incubation programmes, such as the Design Incubation Programme operating at the InnoCentre and the Cyberport's IncuTrain Programme, assistance had been provided to facilitate start-ups and development of creative establishments in the design sector and the digital entertainment industry. To promote the development and expansion of local creative industries in the Mainland and overseas, funding support would be provided for various sectors of the industries to carry out promotional projects or to participate in fairs and other promotional activities overseas and on the Mainland. The Administration

would regularly update the Panel on the progress of the various initiatives.

20. Mr Andrew LEUNG noted that the Centre for Entrepreneurship of the Chinese University of Hong Kong had recently criticized the Government for the lack of support for Hong Kong young talents in design and creative business. He asked what concrete measures the Administration would put in place to support young talents in the design and creative business and to promote the development of creative industries.

21. Citing the comics industry as an example, SCED said that in collaboration with the local comics sector, action was in hand to develop a mobile distribution platform to facilitate the promotion and distribution of Hong Kong-produced comics locally and overseas. Through the CSI, support would be provided to the local comics industry to develop a new mobile phone-based platform whereby smart phone users around the world could easily browse and purchase comics produced in Hong Kong in electronic form. The Administration would brief the Panel on the progress of the work of CreateHK and the relevant initiatives undertaken to support creative industries and develop the creative economy in Hong Kong.

22. Mrs Regina IP commented that the design items for sale at the Design Gallery of the Hong Kong Trade Development Council (HKTDC) were mediocre and yet expensive. She called for closer cooperation between the Hong Kong Design Centre and HKTDC so that Hong Kong designers and artists could come up with innovative and creative signature products to showcase Hong Kong's creativity. SCED undertook to convey the suggestion to the HKTDC.

Support measures for the film industry

23. Mr WONG Ting-kwong commended the Administration for the successful implementation of the FDF Scheme which had been effective in promoting the long-term healthy development of the local film industry. Noting that the revenue recouped from the sales income of a theatrically released film would go to the Treasury instead of being ploughed back to the FDF Scheme to finance other film projects, and that part of the funding was set aside to finance a one-year "Film Professionals Training Programme", Mr WONG expressed concern whether the FDF would soon be depleted.

24. SCED replied that according to the terms and conditions of the FDF Scheme, the profits from box office receipts recouped for the Government's investment should be returned to the public coffer. The present uncommitted balance of the FDF was well over \$100 million. The Administration would monitor closely the operation of the FDF Scheme and

review the funding requirements when necessary.

25. In response to Mr WONG Ting-kwong's enquiry about the "Film Professionals Training Programme", SCED and PSCED(CT) said that through the FDF Scheme, the Federation of Hong Kong Filmmakers had been provided with a \$970 million funding support to organize a one-year programme to provide specialized technical training for frontline workers in various disciplines of the local film industry. SCED was confident that in addition to the courses for TV and film production crew provided by the Academy for Performing Arts, the training curriculum which was drawn up in consultation with the industry would help to train up both new entrants and incumbent film practitioners to meet the industry's needs for different talents at various skill levels. The Administration would review the progress and assess the effectiveness of the training programme on a regular basis to decide on the way forward.

Promoting the development of information and communications technology in Hong Kong

26. Mr Ronny TONG expressed disappointment that the CE in his policy address had failed to set out any long-term policy for the development of information and communications technology (ICT) in Hong Kong. Sharing a similar view, Dr Samson TAM and Mr Andrew LEUNG said that the industries were disappointed that the Government had not attached sufficient importance to the promotion of digital economy in Hong Kong.

27. SCED replied that the Government had all along attached great importance to strengthening support for ICT industries and to harness the power of information technology (IT) for the benefit of business and citizens alike, and at the same time to strengthen Hong Kong's position as a leading digital city in the world. She highlighted that the Digital 21 Strategy had laid down the blueprints for Hong Kong's development in IT and set out the framework for promoting Hong Kong as a leading digital city. Through the deployment of the IT infrastructure, and the implementation of various initiatives such as enhancing the Governmental portal, developing a personalized version of GovHK, improving the efficiency of e-government services delivery, as well as support measures to mitigate the impact of digital divide, efforts had been made to foster a harmonious society, to better meet the needs of users, and to bring more convenience to the general public, thereby improving the quality of living of Hong Kong people.

Promoting Hong Kong as a data centre hub in Asia

28. Dr Samson TAM noted that the Administration had commissioned a study to examine the economic benefits attributable to data centres. He urged the Administration to draw up long-term policy, detailed plan and timetable for the development of data centre industry in Hong Kong, and in particular, to tackle the issue of the availability of land resources for setting up data centres. Mrs Regina IP said that there were strong calls from the industry to leverage on the strength of Hong Kong (such as the transparent regulatory and judicial systems, pro-business environment, free market approach, freedom of speech and privacy laws) as a suitable location for setting up data centres to build Hong Kong into the Asia's data centre hub. The development of data centre service in Hong Kong, though might not lead to a significant increase in job opportunities, would however serve to strengthen Hong Kong's position as a leading digital city. She said that training to provide a skilled workforce with the requisite technical expertise was essential to facilitate the development of the industry.

29. SCED replied that it was the Government's clear policy objective to support the development of high-end data centres in Hong Kong and to promote Hong Kong as an ICT hub in Asia. The Administration had been communicating with the local data centre-related sectors to understand their operational issues. She agreed that the development of data centres would not directly create too many job opportunities in Hong Kong but might generate substantial wider economic impacts to Hong Kong. In this regard, a study had been commissioned in May 2010 to examine the economic impacts that data centres would bring to Hong Kong. The Administration would update the Panel of the latest development after the study was completed in December 2010. As regards the availability of land suitable for setting up data centres, she said that there were special requirements in the choice of locations for data centres to meet security and power requirements. NTT Communications Corporations, one of the largest global telecommunications service providers, had recently announced a \$3 billion investment in developing a new Tier IV-ready data centre in Tseung Kwan O Industrial Estate.

Adoption of cloud computing

30. Dr Samson TAM referred to the global trend and the examples in Taiwan and Foshan in the Mainland on the adoption of cloud computing. He enquired about the Government's plan and roadmap in adopting the cloud computing model to provide effective and efficient delivery of e-government services.

31. In response, SCED said that the adoption of cloud computing would have major implications. The Office of the Government Chief Information Officer was in the process of reviewing the Government IT infrastructure and exploring the opportunities and benefits of adopting cloud computing. Due consideration would be given to aspects such as service level, privacy and security, application development as well as technical and financial implications. The Administration would update the Panel of the outcome of the review in due course.

Review of Ordinances

32. Mr Ronny TONG opined that the Telecommunications Ordinance (Cap. 106) and the Broadcasting Ordinance (Cap. 562), in particular the provisions relating to "qualified person" and "cross-media ownership", were outdated and should be reviewed as soon as possible. SCED assured members that upon the enactment of the Communications Authority Bill, the newly formed Communications Authority, which would assume the existing statutory powers and functions of the BA and the Telecommunications Authority, would review and rationalize the relevant ordinances as one of its priority tasks.

II. Any other business

33. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 10:30 am.