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3 December 2010

Hon Wong Yuk-man
Chairman
Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting
Legislative Council
Room 320, West Wing
Central Government Offices
Hong Kong

Dear Chairman,

**Radio Television Hong Kong —
New Developments in Public Service Broadcasting**

The Government decided about a year ago to task the Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) to fulfill the role and mission as the public service broadcaster of Hong Kong.

Having completed resource allocation formalities, the Government has now formulated plans for the coming few years that would enable RTHK to fulfill its new role and mission. We have just briefed staff members of RTHK on the various new developments, including the new resources and additional posts earmarked for the department, arrangements on the resumption of staff promotion and recruitment, plans for the launch of digital audio broadcasting and digital terrestrial television services, digitisation of programme archives, provision of funding for the Community Broadcasting

Involvement Fund as well as the proposed site for the new broadcasting house. I attach a note highlighting these for your reference.

We stand ready to brief the Panel on the subject at a time convenient to the Panel.

Yours sincerely,

Elizabeth

(Miss Elizabeth Tse)
for Secretary for
Commerce and Economic Development

c.c. Clerk to Panel (Attn: Ms Yue Tin-po)
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Radio Television Hong Kong – New Developments in Public Service Broadcasting

(A) New Resources

The Government will propose to allocate new resources to RTHK as from 2011-12 for launching various services, including –

- recurrent funding for launching digital audio broadcasting (DAB) services, increasing the production of high definition (HD) television programmes in preparation for the launch of digital terrestrial television (DTT) services, planning for the new Broadcasting House, digitization of programme archives, etc.
- non-recurrent funding, in full amount as sought by RTHK, for the procurement of equipment and facilities to kick start the DAB and DTT services.

(B) Manpower Resources

Additional Posts

2. RTHK will create a number of new civil service posts in 2011-12, including one permanent post of Controller (Broadcasting Services) ranked at D1 and a supernumerary post of AOSGB to be designated as Deputy Director of Broadcasting for three years.

3. The new posts proposed to be created are mainly responsible for planning for the launch of DAB and DTT services, development of the new Broadcasting House in Tseung Kwan O, preparing for community involvement broadcasting, etc.

Internal Promotion and Open Recruitment

4. There are currently about 80 civil service vacancies in different ranks of the Programme Officer grade in RTHK.

5. RTHK will resume internal promotion for staff at various ranks (directorate and non-directorate). After completing internal procedures, RTHK will resume convening relevant promotion boards in the first quarter of next year. The procedures include completing appraisal reports, updating the Guide to

Appointment and seeking approval from Civil Service Bureau and the Public Service Commission, etc.

6. In parallel, RTHK will resume the recruitment of civil servants for vacancies in the Assistant Programme Officer rank. Interested and eligible persons can apply in the first quarter of next year.

7. The RTHK team is the most important asset of the department. RTHK's management will soon be in touch with colleagues to explain its plans for and details on the promotion and recruitment exercises. RTHK plans to complete the necessary work next year to reduce unnecessary anxiety among colleagues so that the RTHK team can fully concentrate at work and gear up properly for the challenges ahead.

(C) Digital Audio Broadcasting (DAB)

8. RTHK will be allocated spectrum frequencies to launch five DAB programme channels in mid-2012.

9. Four of the new DAB programme channels will mainly be used for improving the reception of AM broadcasting (including sound quality) and enhancing existing programme content. The other DAB programme channel will be used for relaying national programmes.

10. RTHK will also provide value-added data services to the audience, such as the screening of news highlights, weather information and traffic reports on DAB receivers.

(D) Digital Terrestrial Television

11. RTHK does not have its own TV transmission network, nor experience in the operation of a TV station. It has an output of 570 hours a year in terms of TV production, broadcast through the two commercial domestic free TV broadcasters. There is a practical need for RTHK to develop its DTT service in a progressive, step-by-step manner.

12. In the next few years, RTHK will be committed to establishing the DTT transmission network, including discussing with the two free-to-air TV broadcasters on the rental of suitable hilltop sites, purchasing transmitters and equipment, and conducting technical trials. The Government has allocated the required resources to RTHK.

13. The Government has also agreed to provide additional resources to enable RTHK to increase its production of HD television programmes from about 50 hours to not less than 200 hours per year as from 2011-12.

(E) Community Involvement Broadcasting

14. RTHK will develop community involvement broadcasting on its digital platform. The Government has earmarked \$45 million for a three-year trial under the proposed Community Broadcasting Involvement Fund. RTHK will work out the details in consultation with the Board of Advisors.

(F) Digitisation of programme archives

15. RTHK is now keeping over 80 years of audio records and over 30 years of TV productions. They are not only part of the public memory but also a very valuable reference source for RTHK and other broadcasters in content production.

16. The Government will set aside resources in the next five years for RTHK to establish a Media Asset Management system in order to preserve the cultural heritage of Hong Kong's public broadcasting and make it accessible by the public and the industry.

(G) Development of New Broadcasting House in Tseung Kwan O

17. The Government has decided on Tseung Kwan O Area 85 as the site for the development of the new Broadcasting House.

18. Compared with the original site, this one is more fitting for development as a broadcasting house because it is larger and subject to far less development constraints, thus substantially reducing construction difficulties. The Government plans to complete the technical feasibility study around the first half of 2011, and will complete the town planning procedures and application for funding as soon as possible.