

**立法會**  
**Legislative Council**

LC Paper No. CB(1)1783/11-12(09)

Ref. : CB1/PL/ITB

**Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting**

**Meeting on 14 May 2012**

**Background brief on community involvement in broadcasting**

**Purpose**

This paper summarizes the views and concerns expressed by Members on issues related to community involvement in broadcasting.

**Background**

2. In October 2009, the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau published the consultation paper on "The New Radio Television Hong Kong: Fulfilling its Mission as a Public Service Broadcaster". According to the consultation paper, there were strong calls from some sectors of the community for opening up the airwaves for community and public access broadcasting. There was also a lack of sufficient frequency spectrum to support low-cost reception. This, together with the fact that stand-alone community broadcasting services required substantial financial and human resources, inhibited participation by smaller community groups. The consultation paper pointed out that technological advancement, which provided impetus to the digitization of free-to-air television and the development of Digital Audio Broadcasting (DAB), presented new opportunities to provide more channels and platforms.

3. In view of the above, the Government proposed in the consultation paper that RTHK should be tasked to devote part of its airtime and resources within the development of its digital services to provide a platform for community participation in broadcasting. As a pilot, RTHK would administer a Community Involvement Broadcasting Fund (CIBF) to encourage community organizations to bid for resources for producing television and radio programmes, and would arrange to broadcast these

contents on RTHK's channels.

4. According to the Administration, members of the public were in general supportive of the proposals of encouraging public participation in broadcasting and welcomed the establishment of CIBF. The Administration announced the outcome of the public consultation in April 2010, details of which were given in the Government's consultation report issued vide LC Paper No. CB(1)1520/09-10(05) on 1 April 2010. These proposals were later incorporated into the RTHK Charter published in August 2010 (issued vide LC Paper No. CB(1)2738/09-10(01) on 16 August 2010).

### **Discussions by the Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting**

5. The Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting (the Panel) followed closely issues related to community involvement in broadcasting. When the Panel discussed community involvement in broadcasting at its meetings in 2009 and 2010, members generally supported the establishment of the CIBF as proposed by the Administration in the consultation paper in October 2009. Some members shared the deputations' view that instead of RTHK devoting part of its airtime and resources within the development of its digital service to provide a platform for community participation in broadcasting, the Administration should open up airwaves for independent community groups, non-governmental organizations, religious bodies and ethnic minorities to participate in public access broadcasting and produce their own programmes so as to encourage a plurality of voices. These members also urged the Administration to draw up long-term policy, detailed plan and timetable for opening up airwaves for community broadcasting. The Administration advised that the Government had earmarked \$45 million for a three-year trial under the CIBF. RTHK would work out the details in consultation with the Board of Advisors.

6. At the Panel meeting on 14 February 2011, some Panel members opined that the financial commitment of \$45 million was inadequate in view of the large number of community organizations. As RTHK would work out the details of the community involvement in broadcasting in consultation with the Board of Advisors, these Panel members opined that all community organizations should be extensively consulted on the proposal. In this connection, the Panel requested the Administration to provide more information on the framework and ground rules for the initiative of community involvement in broadcasting and brief the Panel before its implementation.

7. At the Panel meeting on 12 December 2011, members noted that the Administration had held several focus groups with community leaders, discussed with RTHK Programme Advisory Panel, and consulted the Board of Advisors on the framework of Community Involvement Broadcasting Service (CIBS). The Administration had taken into account views gathered in these discussions as well as the production capacity of RTHK in preparing the proposed CIBS set out in the draft consultation paper (issued vide LC Paper No. CB(1)531/11-12(04) on 6 December 2011). Aspects of the proposed CIBS included objectives of CIBS, service targets, programme themes and production cycle, the proportion of programme hours allocated between the Chinese Language Service and the Non-Chinese Language Service, eligibility criteria for community involvement broadcasting (CIB) producers, relationship between RTHK and the CIB producers, facilitation and support to be provided by RTHK, funding arrangement by RTHK, and selection criteria and process. RTHK would conduct a three-month public consultation on CIBS by the end of 2011, with a view to drawing up concrete proposals for consideration by the RTHK Board of Advisors by mid-2012.

8. Some Panel members opined that CIBS should not be offered as a substitute for the opening up of the airwaves for people from all walks of life to produce their own programmes. These members expressed grave concern that programmes produced under CIBS would be subject to the standards and requirements set out by RTHK, and would not be able to achieve plurality, diversity and social inclusion. They also expressed concern that certain community organizations such as the Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups would dominate the CIBF and become its major beneficiary. Some other members opined that the selection criteria and process of CIBS and CIBF should be made as transparent as possible.

9. The Administration advised that as the existing resources of RTHK such as technical hardware were limited, RTHK had to leverage on the support of community organizations and schools in rolling out CIBS. As programmes produced under CIBS would be broadcast on the platform of RTHK, these programmes would be subject to the monitoring of the Broadcasting Authority. On the selection of CIBS applicants, the Administration had not made a decision on the composition of the Vetting Committee (VC). The preliminary idea was to invite the RTHK Programme Advisory Panel and LegCo Members to sit on the VC. The Administration stressed that the proposed CIBS and CIBF would be operating on prudent financial principles. CIBS producers must be accountable to RTHK for the public funds used under CIBF.

10. Some Panel members expressed concern on how the editorial autonomy of CIBS producers would be protected. These members opined that care should be taken to balance the interests of different community groups and the needs of non-Chinese speakers. Noting that RTHK intended to change topics for CIBS on a quarterly basis, they suggested that programmes on popular topics such as health should be broadcast all year round.

11. The Administration advised that RTHK would not be involved in editorial matters, unless upon the request of CIBS producers or in case of non-compliance with the codes of practices issued by the Broadcasting Authority. A decision on programme themes would not be made until the completion of the public consultation exercise. Programmes on popular topics might be broadcast under CIBS throughout the year to cater for the preferences of the listeners. It was envisaged that such programmes would encompass as wide a spectrum of languages and dialects as possible.

12. Some Panel members suggested that the Administration should compile a more detailed and comprehensive consultation paper in order to carry out a meaningful consultation. As programmes under CIBS would be broadcast on RTHK's DAB service, these members urged the Administration to step up efforts to popularize the use of digital radio receivers, so that listeners would have access to the CIBS. The Administration noted members' suggestions and advised that initially, RTHK would, in collaboration with the other DAB service providers, promote the use of digital radio receivers on taxis.

### **Recent developments**

13. At the special meeting of the Finance Committee to examine the Estimates of Expenditure 2011-12 on 7 March 2012, Hon Cyd HO raised a question on radio programmes for ethnic minorities and underprivileged groups. The Administration advised that RTHK planned to launch the 3-year pilot project for CIBS in the next financial year. The Government had earmarked \$45 million for funding applications from groups interested in the project. The CIBS project had two programme branches, namely the Chinese Language Service and the Non-Chinese Language Service. It had commenced a 3-month public consultation which would conclude on 29 March 2012. It was expected that ethnic minorities and the underprivileged would be engaged in the project.

## **Latest position**

14. The Administration will brief the Panel on 14 May 2012 on RTHK's plan to roll out the CIBS and consult members on the establishment of CIBF before seeking funding approval from the Finance Committee in June 2012.

## **Relevant papers**

Legislative Council Brief on public service broadcasting and the future of Radio Television Hong Kong issued on 22 September 2009

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/panels/itb/papers/itb1005-ctbcr9179-e.pdf>

Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat for the Information Technology and Broadcasting Panel special meeting on 5 October 2009

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/panels/itb/papers/itb1005cb1-2663-1-e.pdf>

Minutes of Information Technology and Broadcasting Panel special meeting on 5 October 2009

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/panels/itb/minutes/itb20091005.pdf>

Public consultation paper on the new Radio Television Hong Kong: Fulfilling its mission as a public service broadcaster issued on 6 October 2009

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/panels/itb/papers/itb1005cb1-2726-1-e.pdf>

Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat for the Information Technology and Broadcasting Panel special meeting on 19 November 2009

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/english/panels/itb/papers/itb1119cb1-382-2-e.pdf>

Minutes of Information Technology and Broadcasting Panel special meeting on 19 November 2009

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/english/panels/itb/minutes/itb20091119.pdf>

The Administration's letter of 3 December 2010 on the proposal to allocate new resources to RTHK as from 2011-2012 for launching various services to fulfil its role and mission as the public service broadcaster of Hong Kong

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr10-11/english/panels/itb/papers/itbcb1-682-1-e.pdf>

Information paper provided by the Administration for the Information Technology and Broadcasting Panel meeting on 10 December 2010

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr10-11/english/panels/itb/papers/itb1210cb1-657-4-e.pdf>

Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat for the Information Technology and Broadcasting Panel meeting on 10 December 2010

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr10-11/english/panels/itb/papers/itb1210cb1-657-5-e.pdf>

Minutes of Information Technology and Broadcasting Panel meeting on 10 December 2010

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr10-11/english/panels/itb/minutes/itb20101210.pdf>

Information paper provided by the Administration for the Information Technology and Broadcasting Panel meeting on 14 February 2011

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr10-11/english/panels/itb/papers/itb0214cb1-1224-5-e.pdf>

Background brief on new initiatives of Radio Television Hong Kong prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat for the Information Technology and Broadcasting Panel meeting on 14 February 2011

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr10-11/english/panels/itb/papers/itb0214cb1-1224-6-e.pdf>

Minutes of Information Technology and Broadcasting Panel meeting on 14 February 2011

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr10-11/english/panels/itb/minutes/itb20110214.pdf>

Information paper provided by the Administration for the Information Technology and Broadcasting Panel meeting on 12 December 2011

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr11-12/english/panels/itb/papers/itb1212cb1-531-4-e.pdf>

Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat on community involvement in broadcasting for the Information Technology and Broadcasting Panel meeting on 12 December 2011

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr11-12/english/panels/itb/papers/itb1212cb1-531-5-e.pdf>

Minutes of Information Technology and Broadcasting Panel meeting on 12 December 2011

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr11-12/english/panels/itb/minutes/itb20111212.pdf>

Special meeting of the Finance Committee to examine the Estimates of Expenditure 2011-12 on 21 March 2011 — Administration's replies to Members initial written question (serial no. 1413)

[http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr11-12/english/fc/fc/w\\_q/cedb-ct-e.pdf](http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr11-12/english/fc/fc/w_q/cedb-ct-e.pdf)

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Legislative Council Secretariat  
8 May 2012