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**Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting**

**Meeting on 4 February 2013**

**Updated background brief on the progress of the implementation of  
digital terrestrial television broadcasting in Hong Kong**

**Purpose**

This paper sets out the progress of the implementation of digital terrestrial television ("DTT") broadcasting in Hong Kong, and provides a summary of views and concerns previously expressed by Members.

**Background**

2. Pursuant to the implementation framework for DTT broadcasting announced by the Government in 2004, the two domestic free television programme service licensees, i.e. Asia Television Limited ("ATV") and Television Broadcasts Limited ("TVB"), officially launched DTT on 31 December 2007. ATV and TVB had been assigned three digital multiplexes to provide DTT services to the viewing public. They shared one multiplex for the digital simulcast of their four analogue television programmes. In addition, each broadcaster took up one additional multiplex to provide new digital television programme channels and services.

3. Since the successful launch of DTT at the end of 2007, the two existing domestic free television programme service licensees have completed construction of 29 DTT transmission stations. According to the Administration, the latest DTT network coverage stands at over 96%. The DTT take-up rate has reached about 70% of the total households which have access to DTT service through various means.

## **Previous discussions**

4. The Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting ("the Panel") received regular reports from the Administration on the latest progress of the implementation of DTT and network rollout since 2007. Panel members in general supported the implementation of DTT broadcasting which had brought major benefits in enhancing efficiency in utilizing radio spectrum, resolved some reception problems, and offered opportunities of new services.

5. On 21 June 2011, the Chief Executive in Council ordered that the target date for switching off analogue television services (i.e. analogue switch-off, or "ASO") be deferred from end 2012 to end 2015. Given that DTT network coverage only stood at about 89% of the Hong Kong population in late 2010, the network coverage of DTT was not yet on par with that of analogue TV at about 98%. Moreover, as the DTT take-up rate stood only at about 63%, the Administration considered that the rate should reach a much higher level than 60% before ASO should be considered.

6. At the Panel meeting on 11 July 2011, members noted that the deferral of ASO would give ATV and TVB more time to extend and optimize their DTT network including the feasibility study on improvement of coverage in remote areas where current analogue television reception was poor, and would allow more time for the viewing public to switch to DTT and for the Administration to coordinate with the Mainland authorities on the use of digital dividend in order to yield the maximum economic benefits for Hong Kong.

7. Some Panel members expressed concern that the new target date for ASO in end 2015 might have to be further postponed if there was no improvement on DTT coverage. These members considered that the two domestic free television programme service licensees should invest more so as to enlarge the DTT network during the deferral period from end 2012 to end 2015. They also opined that more quality programmes should be broadcast in the DTT channels so as to encourage the audience to switch to DTT. The Administration advised that the DTT network was currently made up of 20 transmitting stations and nine more would be built by end 2011 to further extend the network coverage. The location of the transmitting stations, including the nine new fill-in stations, and the respective covered areas are set out in the **Appendix**. The Administration advised that based on prudent commercial considerations, the television licencees had already seen the need to broadcast quality programmes on their DTT channels to enhance the penetration rate and acted accordingly.

8. Some Panel members opined that the penetration rate might be misleading as many households owned the receivers to watch DTT services on top of the traditional analogue TV sets. To be more accurate, the number of households which owned the receivers to watch DTT services in addition to the analogue TV sets should also be included in the assessment of the penetration rate. This would help the Administration set a more reasonable ASO target date which would not entail the premature and full scale redundancy of the analogue TV sets. The Administration advised that statistics on the number of households which owned the receivers to watch DTT services in addition to the analogue TV sets were not kept by the Administration. Premature replacement of the analogue TV sets on a large scale as a result of ASO was not envisaged as the prices of set-top boxes which enabled the watching of DTT service on analogue TV sets had fallen to very affordable levels.

9. At the Panel meeting on 12 March 2012, members expressed concern about the slow progress of the DTT take-up and enquired if the target date for ASO in end of 2015 would have to be further postponed. The Administration advised that DTT take-up rate by the viewing public had increased from 3.5% in early 2008 to 68.6% in end of 2011. It was envisaged that the take-up rate would continue to grow in the run-up to end of 2015, albeit at a slower pace.

10. Some Panel members opined that there were still buildings in Hong Kong where the television reception system had not been upgraded to receive DTT signals. This would pose a problem to DTT take-up and should be tackled before ASO could be implemented. The Administration advised that the communal aerial broadcast distribution ("CABD") systems had been installed in multi-storey buildings. The former Office of the Telecommunications Authority had issued technical specifications and guidelines for the reception and distribution of DTT signals in buildings. Incorporated owners and building managers were encouraged to upgrade their CABD systems for DTT reception and to install additional amplifiers/filters for DTT channels.

11. Noting that the frequent re-run of DTT programmes by domestic free television programme service licensees would affect the DTT take-up rate, some Panel members opined that provisions governing the frequency of the re-run programmes should be included in the licence conditions of these licensees to prevent the excessive re-run of programmes. The Administration advised that the former Broadcasting Authority had drawn attention to one of the licensees complaints about the frequency of re-run programmes and the need to put precious radio spectrum into optimal use. Nevertheless, the licensees would have the autonomy in programme content.

### Special meeting of the Finance Committee

12. Hon Miriam LAU raised a question on, inter alia, the Administration's work plan and expenditure estimates of DTT services at the special meeting of the Finance Committee to examine the Estimates of Expenditure 2012-2013 on 7 March 2012. The Administration advised that in 2012-2013, it would continue to monitor the optimization of network coverage by the two existing domestic free television programme service licensees with existing resources.

### **Recent developments**

13. At the policy briefing for the Panel on 18 January 2013, the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development briefed members on the relevant initiatives featuring in the Chief Executive's 2013 Policy Address. Members noted that the two domestic free television programme service licensees will continue to optimize their DTT network to bring the coverage on par with that of the analogue TV broadcasting, which is about 99% of the population by the end of 2013. The Administration would continue their publicity efforts to further boost up the DTT take-up in Hong Kong.

### **Latest position**

14. The Administration will brief the Panel on 4 February 2013 on the latest progress of implementation of DTT services.

### **Relevant papers**

15. A list of the relevant papers with their hyperlinks is at:  
[http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr11-12/english/panels/itb/papers/itb\\_ad.htm](http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr11-12/english/panels/itb/papers/itb_ad.htm)

## Appendix

### Covered areas and transmitting stations of digital terrestrial television (DTT) services

DTT station	Covered areas
<i>(A) The 20 existing DTT transmitting stations</i>	
Temple Hill	Quarry Bay, North Point, Wan Chai, Central & Western, Yau Tsim Mong, Kowloon City, Wong Tai Sin, Sham Shui Po, Sha Tin, Cheung Chau, Discovery Bay
Kowloon Peak	Siu Sai Wan, Chai Wan, Shau Kei Wan, Sai Kung, Tseung Kwan O, Yau Tong, Kwun Tong
Golden Hill	Lai Chi Kok, Kwai Chung, Tsing Yi, Tsuen Wan, Ting Kau, Sham Tseng, Tsing Lung Tau
Castle Peak	So Kwun Wat, Tuen Mun, Lam Tei, Yuen Long, Tin Shui Wai, Tung Chung
Cloudy Hill	Ma On Shan, Ma Liu Shui, Tai Po, Fanling, Sheung Shui, Lo Wu
Lamma Island	Repulse Bay, Wong Chuk Hang, Ap Lei Chau, Aberdeen, Pok Fu Lam, Lamma Island
Mount Nicholson	Happy Valley, Causeway Bay, Wan Chai
Sheung Yeung Shan	Tseung Kwan O, Sheung Yeung, Ha Yeung, Sheung Sze Wan
Sai Wan Shan (Chai Wan)	Chai Wan, Siu Sai Wan
Piper's Hill	Cheung Sha Wan, Sham Shui Po
Brick Hill	Aberdeen, Shouson Hill, Repulse Bay, Chung Hom Kok
Beacon Hill	Hin Tin, Tai Wai
Hill 374 (Yuen Long)	Yuen Long, Mong Tseng Wai, Shui Pin Tsuen
Potting Peak	Shek O, Hok Tsui (Cape D'Auguilar)
Stanley	Stanley, Red Hill
Cheung Chau	Cheung Chau
Hill 141 (Tai Lam Chung)	Tai Lam Chung
Tai Po Tsai	Tai Po Tsai
Robin's Nest	Shan Tsui, Yim Liu Ha, Luk Keng, Ping Che, Kwan Tei
Tai O	Tai O

DTT station	Covered areas
<i>(B) The nine DTT fill-in stations to be completed by end of 2011</i>	
Hill 297 (Yuen Long)	Shap Pat Heung, Tai Tong
Hill 275 (Lantau Island)	Mui Wo, Pui O, Tong Fuk, Cheung Chau
Chiu Keng Wan Shan	Tiu Keng Leng
Ap Lei Chau Aberdeen	Ap Lei Chau, Aberdeen
Kau Wa Keng	Kau Wa Keng San Tsuen, Kau Wa Keng Old Village
Ying Pun	Ngau Tam Mei, Lin Tong Mei
Sham Tseng	Sham Tseng Village, Sham Tseng San Tsuen, Sham Tseng Kau Tsuen
Tung Chung	Lung Tseng Tau, Wong Ka Wai, Ha Ling Pei, Sheung Ling Pei, Ma Wan New Village,
Pok Fu Lam	Pok Fu Lam Village