

**For discussion on
11 March 2013**

**Legislative Council Panel
on Information Technology and Broadcasting**

**Radio Television Hong Kong's
Community Involvement Broadcasting Service
and the role and future of Radio Television Hong Kong**

Purpose

This paper sets out the role and future of Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) as the public service broadcaster (PSB) of Hong Kong, and updates Members of the progress of the roll out of the Community Involvement Broadcasting Service (CIBS).

Background

2. Since the Government's decision in September 2009 on the way forward on the development of public service broadcasting in Hong Kong, RTHK has been tasked to take up the mission to serve as the PSB for Hong Kong, with safeguards and appropriate resources provided to allow it to do so effectively. The Government promulgated the RTHK Charter (the Charter) in August 2010 and established the RTHK Board of Advisors (the Board) in September 2010.

3. The Charter enshrines the editorial independence of RTHK and sets out the public purposes and mission of RTHK. The main function of the Board is to advise the Director of Broadcasting (DoB) on a range of issues relating to the services of RTHK, including editorial principles, programme standards, performance evaluation, service improvements and community involvement in broadcasting. The Charter clearly provides that the Board will not be involved in the day-to-day operation or staffing matters of RTHK. The Board is advisory in nature and has no executive power.

Role and Future of RTHK

4. Looking ahead, RTHK will continue to fulfill its mission as the PSB of Hong Kong as set out in the Charter, and will continue to provide editorially independent, professional and high-quality radio, television and new media services.

5. To fulfill its mission as the PSB of Hong Kong, RTHK is now embarking on various new development plans, including the launch of digital audio broadcasting and digital terrestrial television broadcasting service, facilitating community involvement in broadcasting, establishing a digital media asset management system and planning for the construction of the new Broadcasting House in Tseung Kwan O. Progress of these new plans is set out in the ensuing paragraphs.

Digital Audio Broadcasting

6. RTHK has been allocated frequency spectrum to launch five Digital Audio Broadcasting (DAB) channels. After a series of preparatory work, trial tests and publicity campaigns to promote public awareness of DAB, RTHK's five DAB channels were formally launched on 17 September 2012. These five DAB channels are –

- (a) DAB-31 (Putonghua) – general programming, news and finance;
- (b) DAB-32 (Putonghua) – China National Radio Hong Kong edition relay;
- (c) DAB-33 (English) – news and general programming;
- (d) DAB-34 (English) – BBC World Service relay; and
- (e) DAB-35 (Cantonese) – elderly, cultural and education.

7. The new DAB service enhances the reception quality by simulcasting RTHK's existing AM channels, including the provision of clear sound that is comparable to CD quality. Data transmission

alongside with audio broadcast also provides text information, such as instant reports on news, local, regional and world weather reports, and traffic news.

8. On top of attracting audience from the existing AM channels, RTHK has also enriched the programme contents of the DAB channels by producing new types of programme and targeted in particular new audience groups. To this end, RTHK has been producing two hours of new programmes daily for DAB-31 and DAB-35 since 4 February 2013. Apart from relay of local soccer matches, the audio-books programme is one of the major attractions of the DAB channels, which will help bring to the listeners the joy of reading. A new programme introducing the natural environment of Hong Kong, featuring the sounds occurring in the natural environment such as birds chirping and twittering, is being produced. Audio-movies are also being produced once a month for the visually impaired, and will offer the audience a new experience in film appreciation.

Media Asset Management

9. Funding has been allocated to RTHK to embark on a Media Asset Management (MAM) project starting from 2011-12 to restore archive materials at risk, digitise the most valuable portion (about 25%) of RTHK archives, and provide specialised storage for the archive materials to facilitate easy access and retrieval.

10. RTHK is conducting digitisation of photo and audio archive contents at its Rumsey Street Workshop. By end of March 2013, it is expected that around 7 800 hours of audio contents and all photo negatives from RTHK's archives will be digitised. Meanwhile, preparation for digitisation of video archive contents is under way.

11. To share with the public the initial result of the MAM project, RTHK launched Phase 1 of the "RTHK Memory" website in November 2012. Around 100 hours of audio and video RTHK archive materials and also photos featuring the classic television series "Below the Lion Rock" are now available for public viewing. RTHK will make continued effort to expand the collection by phases.

Digital Terrestrial Television

12. With the allocation of frequency spectrum for development of digital terrestrial television (DTT) service, RTHK has since 1 July 2012 been conducting technical tests for one high definition and two standard definition (SD) television channels through Temple Hill Transmission Station, and broadcasting test signals of the new television channels. Before the end of 2013, another three transmission stations, namely Golden Hill, Castle Peak and Kowloon Peak, will also commence operation by phases. By then, the coverage of the signal tests is expected to be over 50% of the Hong Kong population.

13. Upon completion of the signal tests, RTHK plans to start DTT transmission trial run by phases from the last quarter of 2013. As part of the signal tests, RTHK has commenced broadcasting, on a trial basis, the Legislative Council meetings every Wednesday on one of its SD channels from 9 January 2013. Subject to the completion of the necessary technical infrastructure and result of the trial of programme transmission, RTHK plans to fully launch its DTT service by 2018 after the commissioning of its new Broadcasting House.

14. For the development of DTT, the Government has proposed to allocate new resources to RTHK from the financial year 2013-14. These include addition of 85 civil service posts and seven non-civil service contract positions in 2013-14 and onwards. The total amount of additional recurrent provision (including personal emoluments) proposed for RTHK will be around \$84.5 million in 2013-14. With these proposed new resources, RTHK's current target is to gradually increase its TV output hours starting from 2013-14. The new output hours will include programmes of in-house production, acquired overseas programmes as well as commissioning of local production. RTHK will also start the preparatory work for the operation and management of TV channels. These include the work on channel scheduling, programming, promotion etc.

Construction of new Broadcasting House

15. The new Broadcasting House (New BH) will be located at a

site in Area 85, Tseung Kwan O. With the completion of the Technical Feasibility Study in mid-2011, the application for change of land use of the site for the construction of the New BH was approved by the Town Planning Board in April 2012. In October 2012, four contractors were prequalified through tendering procedure to participate in the design and build contract for the New BH. The tender of the contract was invited on 5 February 2013 with a closing date on 3 May 2013. Upon completion of the tendering procedure, RTHK will seek funding for the project through established mechanism, which is expected to be around the last quarter of 2013. Subject to approval of the necessary funding, construction of the New BH is scheduled to start in the first quarter of 2014 with a view to commissioning in the last quarter of 2018.

Community Involvement Broadcasting Service

16. Apart from the new developments mentioned above, the roll out of the pilot project for CIBS is also a key feature in RTHK's efforts in fulfilling its mission as the PSB of Hong Kong. At its meeting on 25 May 2012, the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council approved a new commitment of \$45 million for setting up a Community Involvement Broadcasting Fund (CIBF) to support and encourage community and ethnic minority organisations or individuals to participate in broadcasting through CIBS.

17. RTHK's preparatory work has been in full swing since then, which included the formulation of application procedures, guidelines, agreements, etc. with the assistance of the Department of Justice and the Independent Commission Against Corruption. The CIBS Selection Committee has also been established, with seven non-official members appointed by DoB. These seven members comprise scholars in communications or broadcasting, experts from different fields drawn from the RTHK Programme Advisory Panel and a member familiar with ethnic minority issues. The membership and terms of reference of the Selection Committee are at **Annexes A and B** respectively. Members of the public may participate in the selection process through voting at the CIBS thematic website, and the result of which will be taken into account by the Selection Committee.

18. CIBS applicants can choose to apply for funding under the CIBF to defray actual expenses (namely technical and labour costs) incurred for the production of CIBS programmes. Funding support for technical and labour costs will be capped at a ceiling of \$7,500 per half-hour programme and \$15,000 per one-hour programme. As voluntarism is the core spirit of CIBS, a standard rate, in the form of honorarium per person with a limited quota of participants (e.g. producers, presenters, scriptwriters and researchers) on each episode, will be adopted. The CIBS Selection Committee has fixed the level of honorarium at \$300 and the quota of participants at 10 persons per episode.

19. RTHK will adopt 11 programme themes for CIBS, namely education, art and culture, social services, ethnic minorities, politics and current affairs, economy and finance, health, environment, religion and philosophy, science and technology and district affairs. Each quarter will have three themes, one of which will be dedicated to ethnic minorities. Each CIBS programme will have 13 episodes in one quarter. Applicants can opt for producing either a half-hour or a full-hour programme. There will be two language services in CIBS, namely Chinese Language Service and Non-Chinese Language Service.

20. Invitation for the first round of CIBS applications commenced on 28 December 2012 for a period of eight weeks. Education, art and culture programming will be covered in the first quarter whereas social services, politics and current affairs will be the programme themes of the second quarter. RTHK aims to provide two hours of daily programmes produced by community producers in the first trial year. A thematic internet portal has been launched on the same day to facilitate application (<http://rthk.hk/cibs/>) and a telephone hotline has also been set up for public enquiry (telephone number: 2331 2334).

21. Publicity was launched through radio trailing, advertisements on newspapers, public transport and bus stop shelters. Direct mails were also sent to various non-government organisations. RTHK received a total of 59 applications by the deadline on 21 February 2013, with 16, 13, 12, 8 and 10 applications respectively under the programme themes of education, art and culture, social services, politics and current affairs and ethnic minorities.

22. Public voting will soon be conducted through the internet portal in mid-March to invite public participation in the selection process. The full list of applicants would be presented to the Selection Committee, who will carry out their deliberation in April, and the result would be announced in May 2013. The first CIBS programme is targeted for broadcasting on the DAB channels in mid-July this year.

Advice sought

23. Members are invited to note and comment on the various developments described in preceding paragraphs.

**Radio Television Hong Kong
March 2013**

Community Involvement Broadcasting Service

Selection Committee

Prof Chan Yuen-ying	Director and Professor Journalism and Media Studies Centre University of Hong Kong
Prof Cheuk Pak-tong	Director Academy of Film Hong Kong Baptist University
Prof Anthony Fung	Director School of Journalism and Communication The Chinese University of Hong Kong
Dr Cheung Chor-yung	Senior Teaching Fellow / Dean of Students Department of Public and Social Administration City University of Hong Kong
Prof Tseng Sun-man	Adjunct Professor Department of Cultural and Creative Arts Hong Kong Institute of Education
Ms Lilian Law Suk-kwan	Executive Director The Boys' and Girls' Clubs Association of Hong Kong
Ms Fermi Wong	Executive Director Hong Kong Unison

Community Involvement Broadcasting Service

Selection Committee

Terms of Reference

The terms of reference of the Selection Committee are as follows:

- (a) To vet applications for the Pilot Project for Community Involvement Broadcasting Service (CIBS).
- (b) To vet applications in accordance with the CIBS selection criteria and guidelines on the appropriate level of honorarium and quota of participants entitled to the honorarium, and advising the Director of Broadcasting on the shortlisted applicants and the level of funding.
- (c) To communicate any comments and views on the Pilot Project to the Radio Television Hong Kong through the Secretariat.