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***Legislative Council***

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**Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting**

**Meeting on 9 December 2013**

**Background brief on the development of digital terrestrial television service by Radio Television Hong Kong**

**Purpose**

This paper provides background information on the development of digital terrestrial television ("DTT") service by Radio Television Hong Kong ("RTHK") and summarizes the previous discussions by Members on the subject.

**Background**

2. Public service broadcasting and the future of Radio Television Hong Kong ("RTHK") has been a matter of public concern for over 20 years. Following the deliberations of the Executive Council on 22 September 2009, the Administration announced its decision on the way forward in respect of public service broadcasting and the future of RTHK. In gist, RTHK would remain as a Government department and be tasked to take up the mission to serve as the public service broadcaster ("PSB") for Hong Kong. The Government committed that appropriate resources would be provided for service enhancement to enable RTHK to expand its scope of service to fulfil its role and mission and better serve the community. 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". A three-month consultation was subsequently launched by the Government to gauge public views on how best RTHK should operate to achieve its mission as a PSB. The Administration announced the outcome of the public consultation exercise in March 2010, details of which are given in the Government's consultation report issued vide LC Paper No. CB(1)1520/09-10(05) on 1 April 2010.

3. In 2010, RTHK took forward various new development initiatives, including the preparation for the launch of digital audio broadcasting ("DAB") and digital terrestrial television ("DTT") broadcasting services, facilitating community involvement in broadcasting ("CIB"), planning for the re-provisioning of the Broadcasting House ("BH"), and establishing a digital media asset management ("MAM") system. In December 2010, the Government announced a package of arrangements concerning the provision of resources, manpower and facilities to fully support RTHK in taking forward its new initiatives.

4. According to the Administration, RTHK does not have its own television ("TV") transmission network, nor experience in the operation of a TV station. It has an output of 590 hours a year in terms of TV production, which is broadcast through the two commercial domestic free TV stations. RTHK would develop its DTT service in a progressive and step-by-step manner. In the past few years, RTHK has been establishing the necessary DTT transmission network, including discussing with the two commercial domestic free TV stations on the rental of suitable hilltop transmission sites, purchasing transmitters and equipment, and conducting technical trials. RTHK has also increased its production of High Definition television ("HDTV") programmes from about 50 hours to not less than 200 hours per year as from 2011-2012 to prepare for the launch of HDTV channel in future. Upon the establishment of the transmission network and subject to progress of the preparatory work and the resources required for operating a TV station, RTHK would develop its DTT services progressively according to the needs of the community and market condition.

### **Previous discussions**

5. At the meeting of the Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting ("the Panel") on 14 February 2011, the Administration briefed members on the new developments in PSB. Some members enquired about RTHK's plan on the development of DTT service. The

Administration advised that a spectrum of ultra-high frequency had been reserved for RTHK, which could accommodate one HDTV and two standard-definition television ("SDTV") channels. Over the next few years, RTHK would discuss with the two free-to-air TV broadcasters on the rental of suitable hilltop transmission sites for establishing its DTT transmission network, so as to set up the basic transmission network by 2013-2014 at the earliest, covering 80 to 90% of the population. The HDTV programme channel would broadcast the core productions of RTHK, including informational, educational, cultural and arts programmes, whereas one of the SDTV channels would be used for relaying programmes from China Central Television. RTHK would endeavour to further extend the coverage of its DTT service in future.

6. At the Panel meeting on 11 March 2013, members noted that with the allocation of frequency spectrum for development of DTT service, RTHK had since 1 July 2012 been conducting technical tests for one HDTV and two SDTV 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, would also commence operation by phases. By then, the coverage of the signal tests was expected to be over 50% of the Hong Kong population. Upon completion of the signal tests, RTHK planned to start DTT transmission trial run by phases from the last quarter of 2013. As part of the signal tests, RTHK had commenced broadcasting, on a trial basis, the Legislative Council meetings every Wednesday on one of its SDTV channels from 9 January 2013. Subject to the completion of the necessary technical infrastructure and result of the trial of programme transmission, RTHK planned to fully launch its DTT service by 2018 after the commissioning of its new BH.

7. Panel members also noted that the Government had proposed to allocate new resources to RTHK from the financial year 2013-2014. These included addition of 85 civil service posts and seven non-civil service contract positions in 2013-2014 and onwards. The total amount of additional recurrent provision (including personal emoluments) proposed for RTHK would be around \$84.5 million in 2013-2014. With these proposed new resources, RTHK's current target was to gradually increase its TV output hours starting from 2013-2014. The new output hours would include programmes of in-house production, acquired overseas programmes as well as commissioning of local production. RTHK would also start the preparatory work for the operation and management of TV channels. These included the work on channel scheduling, programming and promotion etc.

8. At the special meeting of the Finance Committee on 10 April 2013, Hon NG Leung-sing and Hon Charles Peter MOK enquired about the progress of digitization, manpower resources and TV output of RTHK, and the development of DTT service by RTHK. The Administration's replies are in **Appendices I and II**.

### **Latest position**

9. The Administration will brief the Panel on 9 December 2013 on the proposal to establish 22 DTT fill-in stations by RTHK.

### **Relevant papers**

10. A list of the relevant papers with their hyperlinks is at:

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

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr10-11/english/panels/itb/papers/itb0214cb1-1224-9-e.pdf>

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr12-13/english/panels/itb/papers/itb0311cb4-458-5-e.pdf>

Council Business Division 4  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
4 December 2013

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2013-14

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO  
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

Reply Serial No.

**CEDB(CT)128**

Question Serial No

0671

Head: 160 – Radio Television Hong Kong      Subhead (No. & title): 000 Operational Expenses

Programme:

Controlling Officer: Director of Broadcasting

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development

Question: In 2013-14, the non-directorate posts of Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) will be increased by 105 to 656, representing a rise by 19%, which is the largest increase among the government departments. Can RTHK partly offset the increase through internal redeployment and efficiency enhancement?

Asked by: Hon. NG Leung-sing

Reply: Among the 105 additional non-directorate posts for Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) in 2013-14, 85 posts are created to provide support to the development of digital terrestrial television (DTT) service. The main duties of these posts include programme production, acquisition and commissioning, media management, production support, engineering and technical support, and the provision of administration, procurement and supplies services. As DTT is a new service and setting up a new television station would involve substantial additional work, it is necessary for RTHK to create these posts to cope with the additional duties.

The remaining 20 civil service (CS) posts are created to replace corresponding non-civil service contract positions which have a long-term need. These posts are mainly responsible for assisting in the production of radio, television and new media programmes and rendering support to the work of telecommunication engineering, information technology, procurement and supplies. After the creation of the CS posts, the corresponding NCSC positions will be deleted to offset the increase. Thus, RTHK will not have any actual increase in its manpower in respect of these posts.

Name in block letters: Roy TANG

Post Title: Director of Broadcasting

Date: 8.4.2013

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2013-14

Reply Serial No.

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO  
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

**CEDB(CT)176**

Question Serial No

5005

Head: 160 – Radio Television Hong Kong      Subhead (No. & title): 000 Operational Expenses

Programme: (1) Radio, (2) Public Affairs and General Television Programme

Controlling Officer: Director of Broadcasting

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development

Question: What are the estimated establishment and expenses involved in RTHK digitisation projects (including DAB and DTT) in 2013-14 and those for the past three years (i.e. 2010-11, 2011-12 and 2012-13) ? The DAB development has been stagnant in Hong Kong, are there any plan(s) from the Administration for giving more to efficiently invest into RTHK in this regard, which covered IT systems and infrastructure, as well as programme content and creativity? If yes, please give the details; if not, reason(s) for that?

Asked by: Hon. MOK, Charles Peter

Reply: In 2011-12, 35 civil service posts and non-civil service contract positions were created for RTHK to cover the manpower required for the planning of the new Broadcasting House, Digital Audio Broadcasting (DAB), Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT) Services and the Media Asset Management project. Furthermore, 2 additional civil service posts were created for RTHK to support DAB and Community Involvement Broadcasting Service (CIBS) in 2012-13. In 2013-14, 92 additional civil service posts and non-civil service contract positions will be created for RTHK to support the development of DTT Services.

As regards the expenses, there was no actual expenditure on DAB for 2010-11. In 2011-12 and 2012-13 (as at 20 March 2013), the expenditures on DAB were \$2.3 million and \$4.3 million respectively. The estimated expenditure on DAB will be \$4.7 million for 2013-14. In 2010-11, there was no actual expenditure on the DTT Services. Expenditures on DTT in 2011-12 and 2012-13 (as at 20 March 2013) were \$2.1 million and \$5.2 million respectively, whereas the estimated expenditure for 2013-14 is \$84 million.

The DAB transmitter network has been substantially completed, and it is currently on final trial run. RTHK will get ready to set up additional gap-fillers for improving the network coverage in conjunction with other digital audio broadcasters.

In view of the DTT transmitter network, RTHK is currently conducting technical trials for one high definition (DTT Channel #31) and two standard definition (DTT Channels #32 and #33) television channels through four transmission stations located in Temple Hill, Golden Hill, Castle Peak and Kowloon Peak. Test signals via the said transmission stations have transmitted to most TV households in Kowloon Peninsula, H.K. Island North, Shatin, New Territories West and New Territories East. At present, the signal coverage is over 50% of the Hong Kong population. Works of other transmission stations will be carried out in phases in the coming years. It is expected that the signal coverage will be eventually extended to the whole territory. Programme transmissions are also expected to commence in phases starting from end of 2013. In 2013-14, RTHK will produce an addition of 154 hours of TV output, covering current affairs, socio-political, education, culture and arts,

programmes for teenagers and children, to be delivered on a high definition television (HDTV) channel.

In addition to enhancing the DAB transmitter network and promotion of DAB channels, new programmes would be introduced starting from September 2012, which include relay of local football matches, docent-style music tours, oral presentation of movies, sound of the nature and presentation of audio books. Relay of the Legislative Council meetings and introduction of CIBS programmes will start from April and July 2013 respectively.

Name in block letters: Roy TANG  
Post Title: Director of Broadcasting  
Date: 8.4.2013

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO  
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

**CEDB(CT)178**

Question Serial No

5007

Head: 160 – Radio Television Hong Kong      Subhead (No. & title):

Programme: (1) Radio, (2) Public Affairs and General Television Programme

Controlling Officer: Director of Broadcasting

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development

Question: The Administration stated that it would “further enhance the take-up rate of digital terrestrial television” and “continue to arrange publicity activities for the promotion of digital audio broadcasting service”. What is the specific work plan of the Administration in these two aspects? What are the expenditures involved and returns referred?

Asked by: Hon. MOK, Charles Peter

Reply: To enhance the take-up rate of digital terrestrial television (DTT), Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) is committed to the development of the required DTT transmission network. RTHK is conducting signal tests for one high definition (Channel 31) and two standard definition (Channel 32 and Channel 33) television channels. Test signals are transmitted from four transmission stations respectively located at Temple Hill, Golden Hill, Castle Peak and Kowloon Peak to the TV households in most of the regions of the Kowloon Peninsula, Hong Kong Island North, Shatin, New Territories West and New Territories East. At present, RTHK's DTT signal coverage has reached more than 50% of the Hong Kong population. The works of the other transmission stations will be carried out in stages in the coming years. It is expected that signal coverage will finally be extended to the whole territory. The expenditure on works to be conducted in 2013-14 is around \$8.96 million.

For digital audio broadcasting (DAB), since the launch of DAB channels last year, RTHK has held a range of publicity activities, including exhibitions and road shows in various districts, the launch of a dedicated website and provision of an enquiry hotline, advertisements, radio trailing and promotion targeted at the audience. RTHK will roll out a new round of publicity activities in the second half of this year and the expenditure involved is about \$0.8 million.

Name in block letters: Roy TANG

Post Title: Director of Broadcasting

Date: 8.4.2013