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Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting

Minutes of policy briefing
held on Tuesday, 29 October 2019, at 10:00 am
in Conference Room 2 of the Legislative Council Complex

- Members present** : Hon Charles Peter MOK, JP (Chairman)
Hon Elizabeth QUAT, BBS, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Hon James TO Kun-sun
Hon WONG Ting-kwong, GBS, JP
Hon CHAN Kin-por, GBS, JP
Hon Claudia MO
Hon YIU Si-wing, BBS
Hon CHAN Chi-chuen
Hon Christopher CHEUNG Wah-fung, SBS, JP
Ir Dr Hon LO Wai-kwok, SBS, MH, JP
Hon CHUNG Kwok-pan
Hon Alvin YEUNG
Hon CHU Hoi-dick
Hon SHIU Ka-fai, JP
Hon YUNG Hoi-yan, JP
Hon CHAN Chun-ying, JP
- Members absent** : Dr Hon Priscilla LEUNG Mei-fun, SBS, JP
Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-ye, GBS, JP
Hon MA Fung-kwok, SBS, JP
Hon CHAN Han-pan, BBS, JP
Hon Martin LIAO Cheung-kong, GBS, JP
Hon HUI Chi-fung

Members attending : Hon WU Chi-wai, MH
Dr Hon KWOK Ka-ki
Hon IP Kin-yuen
Dr Hon CHIANG Lai-wan, SBS, JP
Hon KWONG Chun-yu

Public officers attending : Agenda item I

Innovation and Technology Bureau

Mr Nicholas YANG, GBS, JP
Secretary for Innovation and Technology

Ms Annie CHOI Suk-han, JP
Permanent Secretary for Innovation and Technology

Dr David CHUNG Wai-keung, JP
Under Secretary for Innovation and Technology

Mr Davey CHUNG Pui-hong, JP
Deputy Secretary for Innovation and Technology (2)

Office of the Government Chief Information Officer

Mr Victor LAM Wai-kiu, JP
Government Chief Information Officer

Efficiency Office

Ms Olivia NIP Sai-lan, JP
Commissioner for Efficiency

Commerce and Economic Development Bureau

Mr Edward YAU, GBS, JP
Secretary for Commerce and Economic
Development

Mr Clement LEUNG, JP
Permanent Secretary for Commerce and Economic
Development (Communications and Creative
Industries)

Ms Julina CHAN, JP
Deputy Secretary for Commerce and Economic
Development (Communications and Creative
Industries)

Mr Edward TO, JP
Deputy Secretary for Commerce and Economic
Development (Communications and Creative
Industries) (Special Review)

Office of the Communications Authority

Mr Tony LI
Acting Director-General of Communications and
Deputy Director of Film, Newspaper & Article
Administration

Mr Sanda CHEUK
Deputy Director-General (Telecommunications)

Radio Television Hong Kong

Mr LEUNG Ka-wing, JP
Director of Broadcasting

Ms CHAN Man-kuen
Deputy Director of Broadcasting (Programmes)

Create Hong Kong

Mr Victor TSANG
Head of Create Hong Kong

Clerk in attendance : Mr Daniel SIN
Chief Council Secretary (1)6

Staff in attendance : Ms Mandy LI
Senior Council Secretary (1)6

Mr Patrick CHOI
Council Secretary (1)6

Miss Yolanda CHEUK
Legislative Assistant (1)6

Action

I. Briefing by the Secretary for Innovation and Technology and the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development on the Chief Executive's 2019 Policy Address

(LC Paper No. CB(1)42/19-20(01) -- Administration's paper on 2019 Policy Address — Policy initiatives of Innovation and Technology Bureau

LC Paper No. CB(1)42/19-20(02) -- Administration's paper on 2019 Policy Address — Policy initiatives of the Communications and Creative Industries Branch, Commerce and Economic Development Bureau)

Relevant documents

The Chief Executive's 2019 Policy Address (*issued on 16 October 2019*)

The Chief Executive's 2019 Policy Address Supplement (*issued on 16 October 2019*)

Briefing by the Secretary for Innovation and Technology

At the invitation of the Chairman, Secretary for Innovation and Technology ("S for IT") briefed members on the major initiatives of the Innovation and Technology Bureau ("I&TB") featured in the Chief Executive ("CE")'s 2019 Policy Address. Details of the relevant policy initiatives were set out in the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(1)42/19-20(01)).

(*Post-meeting note: The speaking note (Chinese version only) was issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1)89/19-20(01) on 29 October 2019.*)

Discussion on innovation and technology issues

Smart City Blueprint for Hong Kong 2.0 and multi-functional smart lampposts

2. Ir Dr LO Wai-kwok said that the Smart City Blueprint for Hong Kong

("the Blueprint") was widely supported by the public and Members, especially Panel members, were interested about its development. However, a number of smart lampposts had been damaged recently as some people were suspicious that the facilities were being used to capture information about individuals. Ir Dr LO commented that the incidents reflected the public's misunderstanding of the functions of these smart lampposts, the Administration's objectives in developing smart city, and the measures in using big data analytics and information technologies in public services. Ir Dr LO asked how the Administration would further elucidate the relevant policies and measures so as to garner public support on smart city development. Mr SHIU Ka-fai expressed a similar view.

3. S for IT said that smart lampposts were important infrastructure facilities in supporting smart city development in Hong Kong as they could accommodate sensors to collect city data such as air quality data, and base stations to support the fifth generation mobile communications (5G) network services. He added that the Administration had consulted the Legislative Council ("LegCo") and the respective District Councils on the Multi-functional Smart Lampposts Pilot Scheme ("the Pilot Scheme") in an open and transparent manner. The Administration was aware of the concerns about protection of personal information and privacy issues arising from the operation of smart lampposts, and had suspended all applications that might have privacy implications until a consensus in the community was reached. A Multi-functional Smart Lampposts Technical Advisory Ad Hoc Committee ("Ad Hoc Committee") comprising non-government members had been set up to provide third-party advice on the operation of smart lampposts to further safeguard personal privacy. S for IT assured members that the Administration would continue to communicate with the public in an open and down-to-earth manner regarding the installation of smart lampposts.

4. Ms Claudia MO, Mr CHAN Chi-chuen and Mr WU Chi-wai commended the Administration for taking heed of public views and putting on hold applications of smart lampposts that might affect individual's privacy. They said that S for IT had set an example of how the Administration should take into consideration public views in policy-making. Mr IP Kin-yuen expressed a similar view and added that open and transparent public consultation was important to win trust and confidence of the public.

5. The Chairman appreciated the Administration's open and transparent approach in allaying public concerns towards smart lampposts, such as by uploading relevant meetings' minutes of the Ad Hoc Committee onto the thematic webpage of the Pilot Scheme so that the public would better understand the work of the Ad Hoc Committee. He further suggested that the membership of the Ad Hoc Committee should be expanded to allow public participation. In

the light of the recent experience in implementing the Pilot Scheme, the Chairman also suggested that the Administration should likewise conduct an extensive public consultation exercise when mapping out the Blueprint 2.0. S for IT noted the Chairman's view and said that the Administration would engage the public in an open and transparent manner to garner wider community support for smart city development.

6. Mr WU Chi-wai said that unless the Administration could restore public trust and confidence on its work, it would continue to face difficulties in implementing policies. Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development ("SCED") said that government departments would work in concert to restore the Administration's credibility, but the public should help preserve the established institution where different departments had specific tasks and mandate to perform. Meanwhile, the Administration would continue to gauge public sentiment through various channels.

7. The Deputy Chairman supported the development of smart city in Hong Kong, and suggested the Administration to step up efforts in promoting the development and applications of innovation and technology ("I&T"). Given the community-wide support for early implementation of smart city initiatives to improve people's daily lives, the Deputy Chairman asked the Administration to maintain close communication with various sectors of the community, so as to better gauge public opinion and prioritize the initiatives in the light of public needs.

Attracting innovation and technology talent

8. Mr CHAN Chun-ying noted the Administration's assessment that the uncertainties in the international trade environment had affected the business environment of local enterprises and was not favourable to I&T development of Hong Kong; the recent spate of social incidents in Hong Kong was also weakening its competitiveness in attracting I&T talent from over the world. He asked whether the number of applications under the various talent-attracting schemes, such as the Technology Talent Admission Scheme, the Researcher Programme and the Postdoctoral Hub, was declining significantly in the past few months. Mr CHAN also enquired whether and how the Administration would enhance the relevant schemes with a view to maintaining Hong Kong's competitive edges amid the keen international competition for talent.

9. Permanent Secretary for Innovation and Technology ("PS(IT)") responded that the number of applications under the Technology Talent Admission Scheme had recorded a downward trend in recent months, while the Researcher Programme and the Postdoctoral Hub remained popular. To address the industry's concerns about the Hong Kong's prospect in I&T development,

CE had announced in the 2019 Policy Address that the scope of the Technology Talent Admission Scheme would be extended to cover companies outside the Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation and Cyberport, as well as to cover new technology areas. The Researcher Programme and the Postdoctoral Hub would also be extended to include all technology companies conducting research and development activities in Hong Kong. The enhanced schemes and measures would be launched in early 2020.

10. The Chairman said the information technology ("IT") sector was concerned about the brain drain amidst an intense worldwide competition for technology talent. The implementation of the latest measures launched under the Emergency Regulations Ordinance (Cap. 241) had had negative impacts on the investment environment. The Chairman suggested that both S for IT and SCED should give their professional advice to warn the Administration of the ramifications of its recent policies.

11. S for IT explained that the Administration's policy was to attract overseas technology talent while encouraging local talent to stay and develop their careers in Hong Kong. As regards the overall investment environment, S for IT held the view that the uncertainties were mainly attributed to the on-going trade issues between the Mainland and the United States as well as the slowing down of global economic growth.

"iAM Smart" platform

12. Mr CHAN Chun-ying expected that many commercial and financial companies would make use of the "iAM Smart" platform to carry out online transactions in future. He asked what the progress was regarding the Administration's briefing public and private organizations, including the Hong Kong Association of Banks ("HKAB") and the Hong Kong Investment Funds Association, on the technical design and operating model of the "iAM Smart" platform.

13. Government Chief Information Officer ("GCIO") advised that the Administration had presented the "iAM Smart" platform to various organizations and financial institutions, including members of HKAB. The Office of the Government Chief Information Officer ("OGCIO") would provide a trial platform in the first quarter of 2020, on which financial institutions could connect to this platform for testing the adoption of "iAM Smart" in their online services. The Administration hoped that more public and private organizations would use the "iAM Smart" platform after it was launched in the fourth quarter of 2020.

14. The Chairman said that the Administration had to allay public concerns about the protection of personal privacy in the "iAM Smart" platform before more people would have confidence in using it. S for IT responded that a new international standard ISO/IEC 27701 had been released to provide guidance on the protection of privacy in IT systems. Compliance with this standard would provide better assurance of privacy protection.

Smart government

15. Mr CHAN Chi-chuen said that, according to a recent media report, the Hong Kong Police Force ("Police Force") had been using an Australia facial recognition technology for at least three years. The technology allowed the Police to identify suspects in the course of criminal investigations. Mr CHAN asked what role I&TB played in the procurement of IT equipment and systems by bureau and departments ("B/Ds") including the Police Force.

16. PS(IT) explained that B/Ds would, according to their needs, develop and implement various IT systems to enhance operational efficiency and productivity. I&TB would give technical advice and support B/Ds on the trial or adoption of IT products and services as necessary. There was no need for B/Ds, including the Police Force, to consult I&TB's views prior to their procurement of systems.

Certifying information of overseas companies for listing in Hong Kong

17. Mr Christopher CHEUNG said that some local financial companies were trying to help overseas companies to list in the Hong Kong Stock Exchange. In doing so, these financial companies would need to certify their clients' company information to meet the listing requirements as prescribed by the Securities and Futures Commission ("SFC"). However, these companies experienced difficulties in certifying the information unless they sent representatives to their overseas clients to conduct the certifying process. Mr CHEUNG asked if the Administration could develop a cross-boundary certification system to facilitate Hong Kong's companies in meeting the listing requirements.

18. PS(IT) said that the I&TB could provide technical advice and support for the development of the relevant systems, if necessary, after the industry and regulatory bodies had agreed on the objectives and functionalities of the systems concerned. Mr Christopher CHEUNG suggested that he might initiate a meeting with SFC, the Administration and the interested financial companies for follow-up.

Possibility of cancellation of economic forums due to protests

19. Mr CHAN Chun-ying noted that the Administration would organize the fifth "Internet Economy Summit" in April 2020. As a number of mega local events, such as Hong Kong Tennis Open 2019, the Hong Kong Cyclothon, and the Hong Kong Wine and Dine Festival had been cancelled one after another, Mr CHAN queried whether the Summit could be held as scheduled, and whether the Administration had any fallback options in the event that the Summit could not proceed on the designated date.

20. PS(IT) advised that the Administration would continue to review various factors, including the social atmosphere, the venue concerned, the number of participants attending, and so on, when considering whether any I&T related events should be cancelled. Individual organizers should have drawn up their contingency arrangements to handle unforeseen circumstances.

21. The Chairman said that the Internet Economy Summit and the Hong Kong Electronics Fair (Spring Edition) would normally be organized in Hong Kong at the same period of time each year. As the Hong Kong Electronics Fair 2019 (Autumn Edition) had been held smoothly earlier this year despite the outbreak of protests, the Chairman expected that the Summit could proceed uninterrupted.

22. The Deputy Chairman said that many foreign investors were deeply worried about the prospects of Hong Kong in the light of the recent local social incidents. Some overseas companies had suspended investment plans, while some well-established enterprises had even laid-off I&T staff. The Deputy Chairman suggested that the Administration should step up efforts to explain Hong Kong's situation to foreign investors that the development of I&T and smart city in Hong Kong, as well as the overall investment environment remained intact.

23. Mr YIU Si-wing expressed concern that there had been numerous instances of violent protests in many districts of Hong Kong. He considered that, given the processions would normally have no fixed schedule and route, the Administration should provide timely information for visitors, such as information on public processions, transport updates, to facilitate their commuting and trip planning.

24. In connection to the spate of recent protests in the society, Mr SHIU Ka-fai asked whether the Administration considered it appropriate for people to encourage others to participate in more drastic activities through the Internet, and whether the Administration would adopt measures to regulate such activities. SCED explained that although there was no legislation in place to specifically regulate expressions made in the Internet, any criminal act such as inciting

others to break the law, was liable to sanctions under the relevant legislation regardless of whether the act was committed online.

[At 11:09 am, the Chairman ordered that the meeting be extended for few minutes beyond its appointed end time at 11:30 am to allow sufficient time for discussion. At 11:37 am, the Chairman ordered that the meeting be further extended to finish discussion of the item. Members agreed.]

Briefing by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development

25. At the invitation of the Chairman, SCED briefed members on the major initiatives relating to the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau ("CEDB") under the 2019 Policy Address. Details of the policy initiatives were set out in the Administration's paper vide LC Paper No. CB(1)42/19-20(02).

Discussion

Radio Television Hong Kong

26. The Deputy Chairman said that she had received public feedback that many programmes produced by Radio Television Hong Kong ("RTHK") appeared to be politically-biased. In some occasions, opinions expressed by programme anchors and phone-in audience contained anti-Police sentiments or pro-independence advocacy. The Deputy Chairman said that, as Hong Kong's public service broadcaster, RTHK should remain impartial in its services and avoid being used as a platform to promote pro-independence messages. Mr YIU Si-wing expressed a similar view. Mr YIU commented that certain RTHK programmes, such as "Hong Kong Connection" and "Headliner", tended to be one-sided, favouring views against the Government. He asked whether RTHK could substantiate its claim of impartiality with statistics.

27. Ms Claudia MO said that the fact that RTHK was funded by the Government did not mean that it should be the Government's mouthpiece. As Hong Kong's public service broadcaster, RTHK should ensure that its news programmes were accurate and fair. Ms MO considered that so far, RTHK had met this expectation. Mr IP Kin-yuen commented that RTHK's productions were impartial and of high quality.

28. SCED responded that RTHK should follow the Charter of Radio Television Hong Kong ("the Charter") to perform the role of Hong Kong's public service broadcaster. Director of Broadcasting ("DoB") explained that RTHK staff was required to adhere to RTHK Producers' Guidelines. DoB said that, as required by the Charter, RTHK had been providing an open platform for the free exchange of views without fear or interference. For phone-in

programmes, talk shows or radio interviews, guests of different political stances and affiliations were invited to express their opinions; listeners were also allowed to phone-in to express their views. Their opinions did not reflect RTHK's position, and RTHK would not filter or restrict guests or listeners to a certain point of view. DoB added that, according to RTHK's statistics, more pro-establishment guests had in fact been invited and attended RTHK's phone-in or discussion forums.

29. As regards public affairs programmes such as "Hong Kong Connection", DoB said that the quality of the productions should be judged by the production standard as well as factual accuracy rather than whether they had covered the positions of different sides. For "Headliner", DoB said that it was a political satire and not a news programme. DoB added that he had already made it clear, in his decision in August 2018 not to live broadcast a talk delivered by the now-banned Hong Kong National Party, that RTHK would not be used as a platform for pro-independence advocacy.

30. Mr SHIU Ka-fai asked, if political satire against the Government such as "Headliner" could be allowed on air, whether RTHK could allocate an equal amount of airtime for other groups with different opinions to express their views. Ms Claudia MO commented that the Government's publicities were already widely covered. Mr CHAN Chi-chuen made similar observations and said that it appeared customary for media, whether local or overseas, to allow more coverage to views and activities opposite to those of the Government.

31. DoB said that RTHK would maintain due impartiality in its programmes as prescribed in RTHK Producers' Guidelines. Guests representing different stances would be invited in equal proportion to talk shows or phone-in programmes and programme hosts would recapitulate opinions during a programme to keep a balance of views.

32. Mr CHAN Kin-por said that he had received many complaints against RTHK. Many of the complainants considered RTHK's productions partial and biased. He asked how RTHK would address such sentiments. DoB responded that RTHK received comments and feedback from the public from time to time, including complaints/suggestions as well as complimentary remarks. Among the 47 000 comments RTHK received between June and September 2019, more than 37 000 were compliments from the public giving credits to the work of RTHK. DoB added that RTHK gave serious consideration to every complaint case and would keep its productions under regular review to make improvements as appropriate.

33. Dr KWOK Ka-ki commented that RTHK faced repression from the Administration and criticism from pro-establishment organizations. He said that

RTHK was left to subsist with meagre resources. The slow progress in the development of the new Broadcasting House and the fact that RTHK had to operate in an existing inadequate building were cases in point. Mr KWONG Chun-yu expressed a similar view. Mr IP Kin-yuen said that RTHK was already short of resources in delivering its objectives but it had to take up additional workload of maintaining the analog television channels left by the Asia Television Limited upon expiry of licence.

34. DoB said that as a government department, RTHK was allocated resources through established procedures, and the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau had been supportive in meeting RTHK's needs for resources. SCED added that RTHK's annual expenditure amounted to an order of \$1 billion. RTHK's expenditure had increased by 117.3% over the past nine years, which was higher than that of the Government as a whole. The establishment had also increased by 44% over the same period. SCED added that RTHK was subject to value-for-money audit by the Director of Audit and content regulation by the Communications Authority under the Charter. There were established mechanisms by which complaints and suggestions could be made. As regards the new Broadcasting House project, DoB said that RTHK was working with some government departments towards the option of constructing a joint-user building.

35. Dr KWOK Ka-ki asked how DoB would ensure that RTHK staff could continue to perform their duties independently and impartially without fear and repression. DoB responded that, as editor-in-chief, he was ultimately responsible for maintaining RTHK's editorial independence. RTHK staff had been able to perform their tasks in accordance with the Charter without fear and interference.

36. Dr CHIANG Lai-wan said that RTHK was originally established in 1928 to disseminate Government information and to provide entertainment to the public. Dr CHIANG said that over the years RTHK seemed to have deviated from this objective. She asked what RTHK's current mission was, and whether it should perform the role as the Government's mouthpiece. Ms Claudia MO and Mr KWONG Chun-yu opined that, as a public service broadcaster, RTHK was ultimately accountable to the public or the taxpayers, not the Administration.

37. SCED responded that notwithstanding RTHK's status as a government department, its role was defined by the Charter as Hong Kong's public service broadcaster. RTHK was duty bound by the Charter to deliver the tasks as prescribed therein, including, among other matters, "promoting understanding of our community, our nation and the world through accurate and impartial news, information, perspectives and analyses".

38. In response to Mr Alvin YEUNG's query, SCED clarified that the Administration had no plan to review the Charter. He added that the Charter was signed jointly by the Chief Secretary, Chairman of the then Broadcasting Authority and Director of Broadcasting in 2010 following an extensive consultation process. A committee had been set up to examine, among other matters, how RTHK should be positioned. A report had been published on which LegCo was consulted. SCED said that RTHK would abide by the terms of the Charter and would be monitored by the mechanism as prescribed therein.

Trade promotion activities overseas

39. Ms Claudia MO held the view that the Administration's trade promotion efforts overseas amidst widespread protests in the society were unlikely to be effective and were a waste of public resources because the Administration had done nothing to restore investors' confidence. SCED responded that the Administration would engage representatives of different sectors in its trade promotion activities, who would present a balanced and objective overview of Hong Kong to potential investors.

Textile upcycling technologies

40. Mr CHUNG Kwok-pan queried which bureau had the policy oversight of the Billie System, an upcycling process by which textile waste was recycled for apparel manufacturing using innovative technology. He said that the Billie System straddled industrial, technology and environmental policies. SCED said that the Billie System was based on a technology developed by the Hong Kong Research Institute of Textiles and Apparel supported by the Innovation and Technology Commission. He added that the fact that the System involved policies of more than one bureau of the Administration might imply that support from more than one source might be available. Mr CHUNG said that the reality was that CEDB, Innovation and Technology Bureau and Environment Bureau had separately indicated that they were not responsible for such development.

II. Any other business

41. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 11:50 am.