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Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting

Meeting on 11 July 2005

**Updated Background Brief on
Broadcasting Services of Radio Television Hong Kong**

Introduction

At the meetings of the Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting (the Panel) held on 19 April, 14 June 2004 and 8 April 2005, the Panel discussed a number of key issues relating to Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK), including the proposed Broadcasting House and the feasibility of commercializing RTHK's productions. Issues related to RTHK's role as a public service broadcaster were also raised at the Panel meeting on 18 January 2005. During the motion debate on "policy on broadcasting" at the Council meeting on 18 February 2004 and special meetings of the Finance Committee (FC) to examine the Annual Estimates of Expenditure, Members also expressed concerns about the services of RTHK.

2. In the wake of recent open remarks by some top government officials on the programming policy of RTHK and its possible competition with commercial broadcasters, the Panel has decided to discuss RTHK's role as a public service broadcaster at the forthcoming meeting on 11 July 2005. Some newspaper cuttings reporting on comments by Mr Donald TSANG, currently Chief Executive, Mr Rafael HUI, currently Chief Secretary for Administration and Mr John TSANG, Secretary for Commerce, Industry and Technology are attached at the **Appendix**. This paper highlights recent discussion by Members on RTHK's editorial independence, programming policy and resources allocation.

RTHK's role as a public service broadcaster

Editorial independence

3. Over the years, Members have re-affirmed the mission of a public service broadcaster to inform, educate and entertain the general public through a balanced mix of high quality programming not adequately provided by commercial broadcasters. Some Members are keen to ensure that RTHK should uphold its editorial independence and continue to provide a platform for free and unfettered expression of views, instead of serving as the Government's mouthpiece to promote its policies. Some other Members however have raised the concern that some of RTHK's current affairs and personal view programmes are too critical of government policies and lack a balanced perspective.

4. The subject of RTHK's editorial independence was the subject of a motion debate at the meeting of the Provisional Legislative Council on 1 April 1998. Members passed the motion that "this Council endorses the editorial independence of Radio Television Hong Kong and the production of fair, balanced and objective news, public affairs and general programming by Radio Television Hong Kong". During the motion debate which took place on 18 February 2004, some Members have suggested that a comprehensive review on broadcasting policy, including public broadcasting service, should be conducted.

5. Members are aware that the working relationship between the Policy Secretary (i.e. Secretary for Commerce, Industry and Technology) and the Director of Broadcasting, their respective responsibilities with respect to each other, the key programmes of activity undertaken by RTHK, as well as its aims and missions are set out in the "Framework Agreement between Secretary for Commerce, Industry and Technology and Director of Broadcasting". The Agreement was first signed in 1993 and the current version of the Agreement has been issued to members separately vide LC Paper No. CB(1)2016/04-05(01).

6. Noting that the Broadcasting Authority conducts public hearings for licence renewal of domestic pay and free television licensees and radio licensees, some members are concerned about the absence of similar requirements on RTHK. To enhance public accountability, RTHK agreed to consider the suggestion of holding open forums for members of the public to air their views on its broadcasting services.

Programming policy

7. Some Panel members consider that RTHK, being Hong Kong's sole publicly funded broadcaster, may have an unfair advantage over its private-sector counterparts which have to strive hard for revenue to sustain their operations. These Panel members refer particularly to the production of popular programmes such as horse-racing reports and Top Ten Chinese Golden Songs Awards etc. They opine that while it may be acceptable for RTHK to take a pioneering role

and fill a market gap in the production of certain types of programmes, RTHK should not compete with the private sector by producing programmes which are already popular productions among commercial broadcasters. Instead, they suggest that RTHK may spearhead the production of programmes rich in artistic or cultural contents and those catering to the needs of minority interest groups.

8. In this regard, RTHK has advised the Panel that under its new programming strategy, RTHK will strengthen the output on news, current affairs and information programmes while continuing to produce programmes on life-long learning, civic education, national education, culture and arts.

Resources allocation

9. The annual financial provision allocated to RTHK during recent years and its staff establishment¹ to support its major programme areas of radio, public affairs television, school educational television (ETV) production and new media services² are as follows :

Year	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
Annual provision (\$m)	515.1	515	496.0	462.7	428.5
Establishment as at end of each financial year	632	622	621	579 (revised estimate)	560 (estimate)

10. Noting the reduction in annual financial provision over the years, some Panel members have expressed grave concern that RTHK may have to cope with the reduced allocation by lowering its programme output and quality. A few members also query whether it is the Government's intention to undermine RTHK's independent operation through budgetary cuts. The Panel is keen to ensure that the development of new services such as RTHK ON INTERNET, which has grown and gained popularity over the years, will not be affected as a result of the reduction in financial provision and that RTHK should be provided with the necessary financial support to maintain editorial independence and produce high-quality programmes.

¹ The figures are taken from the relevant Estimates of Expenditure for RTHK and the annual provision includes provision for ETV service for schools which is under the policy purview of the Secretary for Education and Manpower.

² "New media services" mainly refers to "RTHK ON INTERNET" which provides, inter alia, 24-hour instant news online, live webcast of RTHK's six radio channels. Under the services, users may also access RTHK productions in the past 12 months. "New media services" has been included under RTHK's Annual Estimates of Expenditure as a separate programme area since 2003-04.

11. Addressing members' concerns, the Administration has stressed that the reduction in operating expenditure has been implemented service-wide due to fiscal deficits in the past few years. It has also provided statistics to illustrate that the extent of reduction in annual provision for departments under the purview of the Communications and Technology Branch of the Bureau is broadly consistent. The management of RTHK has informed the Panel that savings had been achieved by the implementation of various efficiency initiatives, not by compromising the quality of its services. As to whether the level of resources allocated to RTHK is determined with reference to the popularity rating of its programmes, the Administration confirms that there is no direct linkage between the popularity ratings and the level of resources allocation. The Administration has also reported that for revenue generation, 60 hours of selected classic television programmes produced by RTHK have been licensed to a successful bidder for production, marketing and distribution worldwide on VCD/DVD format.

Follow-up by the Panel

12. The Panel has previously decided to revisit issues related to RTHK's broadcasting services in July 2005. However, the Administration has suggested to the Panel Chairman that discussion of the subject be deferred to October/November 2005 pending the Administration's review of its public works programme which may shed light on the way forward for the proposed Broadcasting House. At the meeting held on 13 June 2005, members noted and agreed to the Administration's suggestion.

13. In view of the recent comments by top government officials on the role of RTHK and at the suggestion of Hon Emily LAU, the Panel Chairman agreed that the Panel should discuss the matter at the meeting on 11 July 2005. Senior officials from the Bureau and RTHK, as well as staff representatives of RTHK have been invited to attend the meeting to exchange views with members.

報章剪輯

Newspaper cuttings

供立法會議員為立法會程序的目的作參考用

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purposes of the proceedings of the Legislative Council**

立法會秘書處

Legislative Council Secretariat

曾蔭權答問大會強調 港台須作官方喉舌 學者籲尊重編輯自主

【本報訊】候任特首曾蔭權競選時提出要求香港電台停播賽馬及金曲頒獎禮，隨即引起社會廣泛議論，曾蔭權昨晚進一步公開其「整頓」港台的目標，就是要將港台變成協助政府向市民推銷政策的官方電台。有學者認為港台編輯自主，花多少時間宣傳政府政策應由港台自行決定，而且增加宣傳，並不代表更易爭取市民認同政府政策。

記者：莫劍弦 盧文烈 羅偉光

會 蔭權昨晚首次以候任特首身份，出席有公眾參與的答問大會，有五百名市民出席，包括向主辦機構索取入場券的市民及多個社福機構代表，以及負責台上提問的傳媒、學者及各界人士，當中不少人關心曾日後如何改革行政會議；有效推動政府政策，以及培養香港治港人才等題目。

曾蔭權解釋要改組行會，主要希望在制訂政策時，可以多聽民間的聲音，日後行政會議內可以有多些來自商界、學界、甚至中產階級代表，令制訂政策時可以有更多不同意見，再加上透過策略發展委員會收集社會各階層聲音，他認為可以在未有普選前，透過這些渠道，令到市民可以在政府制訂政策時有更廣泛參與。

民主黨也可以入行會

至於民主黨加入行會的問題，曾蔭權強調心目中沒有哪些人可以或不可以入行會，「若果民主黨可以遵守到行政會議規則同紀律，我會樂意考慮。」

曾蔭權認為，港台作為一個用公帑的電台，「公營電台有自己責任同自己做嘅工夫」，他認為港台工作，就是要協助政府推銷政策，「我好相信我自己要借助香港電台，作為一個公營電台，幫我哋（政府）施政方面，將我哋政策好有效咁講畀普羅大眾聽，我希望（港台）達到呢樣嘢。」

曾蔭權又透露他培養未來理想特首的構思，就是要先從事社會服務，有三數年經驗後再進入政府，擔任局長助理等工作，數年後再參加立會選舉，然後重返政府出任局長職務，再從中找合適人士任特首，他正是為這個目標建議開設局長助理，並非想收買政黨。

「24小時宣傳都有用」

曾蔭權又被問到他的「七年惶恐」論，作為前政務司司長，是否也要負上責任，曾就解釋所謂「七年惶恐」是指香港面對金融風暴、沙士時面對困境，他與前任特首董建華也有責任，但現在要將責任量化，他負多些還是董負多些，已沒有意思，現在港人應向前看。

科大社會科學部助理教授馬嶽認為，由於港台編輯自主，是否停播賽馬，增加政府宣傳，應由港台自行決定，而且現時政府已有不少宣傳渠道，市民對政策增加認知，不代表會認同，「就算有個台二十四小時講政府政策，如果市民知你係宣傳，佢哋都唔會聽，重適得其反。」

大學生翁先生在會後批評曾蔭權的答案沒有具體內容，經常迴避問題，他認為曾的表現僅合格，亦有長者讚曾蔭權表現誠懇，給予九十分評價，而年僅十二歲的譚建忠趁曾蔭權離場時，走前與他握手，他說自小已視曾為偶像，他說曾蔭權鼓勵他努力讀書。

Turnover at 12-year low for racing

Ken Martinus

The curtain came down on Hong Kong's longest horse racing season Wednesday night — with total turnover at its lowest level in 12 years.

Despite what the Jockey Club called "a night of fun and crazy drinking" and for which the public, tourists and guests of members were all admitted free, the final meeting of the season — held at Happy Valley for the first time in 27 years — drew a crowd of slightly more than 20,000.

The racing season was to have ended last Sunday at Sha Tin but, as one meeting was abandoned due to heavy rain, the government allowed the Jockey Club to extend the season by three days.

Wednesday night's betting of HK\$773 million took total turnover for the season to HK\$62.66 billion, a drop of 3.66 percent from last year's HK\$65.7 billion and a staggering HK\$29.69 billion down on the peak turnover of HK\$92.35 billion set in the last year of colonial rule.

This year's figure is only slightly better than the HK\$60.14 billion recorded for the 1992-93 season when racing was suspended for one month after several stables were hit by an equine virus.

The reduced turnover means the government will get HK\$8.35 billion in betting tax, which is HK\$427 million less than it got last year, a drop of 4.9 percent. It received HK\$12.3 billion in 1996-97 even though the betting tax at the time was lower.

However, club chief executive Lawrence Wong chose to look at the bright side of the season, noting the remarkable success of Silent Witness who went 18 races before tasting defeat, the international victory of Vengeance Of Rain and the success of Cape Of Good Hope at England's Royal Ascot.

Wong also welcomed the recent agreement with the government on the modernization of the betting duty structure which, he said, will provide an opportunity to reverse the betting trend and allow the club to effectively compete against illegal bookmakers.

According to a senior source, the government can also look forward to an added bonus of close to HK\$3 billion from football betting which has doubled over the past 12 months.

It is the money from football betting that will enable the club to meet its HK\$1 billion commitment to charity this year and pay for some other infrastructure projects in the pipeline
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S. C. M. P.

RTHK poised to pull the plug on racing coverage

Last night's show from Happy Valley may have been the station's farewell

Norma Connolly

RTHK is set to end live radio coverage of horse racing in Hong Kong and last night's programme may have been the station's last.

The government-funded broadcaster said yesterday it would make a decision within the next two weeks whether to scrap live coverage from Happy Valley and Sha Tin. Yesterday's meeting at Happy Valley was the last of the season.

Speculation over RTHK's racing coverage arose following criticism of it from Chief Executive Donald Tsang Yam-kuen.

During his election campaign, Mr Tsang said: "I don't like their live broadcasts of horse racing meetings. As a public broadcaster, it should not go into [the] entertainment business."

RTHK pays the Jockey Club \$750,000 a year for the right to broadcast racing live. Commercial Radio also broadcasts during the same timeslot, but refused to disclose yesterday how much it pays.

Forever Sze Wing-yuen, head of RTHK's corporate communications unit, said the station was considering a number of options, including continuing the current format, broadcasting only from the racecourse, revamping coverage to feature results and highlights, or scrapping the programme.

If the show ends, it leaves the careers of five broadcasters and a producer in doubt.

Racing commentator Ma Yun-chi, who has been with the show for 14 years, said he and his colleagues had been told to expect a decision on their one-year contracts from RTHK executives next week.

Mr Sze said the station had first considered scrapping or amending the format for its racing coverage as part of cost-cutting exercises that began in 2002. He denied that Mr Tsang's comments would influence the decision.

"As long as RTHK has editorial independence, we will make the decision based on our common practices," he said.

"We don't feel pressure from any direction."

But Ma said while there had been discussions on cutting racing coverage in 2002, the subject had not arisen again until after Mr Tsang had made his comments. "I'm quite suspicious," he said.

"A few years ago they discussed the possibility of cancelling the programme. They decided that it was a programme listeners would like to continue to have, so how come they're now talking about cancelling it next season? Is it a matter of money or of political pressure — that is what everyone is thinking.

"If they are bowing to political pressure, it is bad for RTHK; they will lose some of their legitimacy."

Janet Mak Lai-ching, chairwoman of the RTHK Programme Staff Union, said she understood that the station had been considering changing its scheduling for some time, but it had now become a political issue after Mr Tsang's comments. She said the union's stance was that RTHK should remain free from any intervention.

The show's producer, Tam Wing-fai, said the mood among RTHK's racing team "was not so sad — they are all professionals".

Democratic Party legislator Albert Chan Wai-yip said yesterday he did not believe RTHK should be broadcasting racing because Commercial Radio also broadcast it live.

- Harry's view - A16
- Odds of return - C1
- Last night's racing - C13

無意改變編輯自主 勸港台節目應多元化



許仕仁強調政府仍維護港台的編輯自主權。

【本報訊】特首曾蔭權在競選期間曾公開表示希望香港電台的節目能作適當調整，作為特首左右手的許仕仁昨表示，政府無意改變港台編輯自主的傳統，也不是不准港台批評政府，而是希望港台作為公營廣播機構，不要太執着於收聽率，只做大眾化的節目，而應該多做小眾化、多元化的節目，多做一些不是所有人都鍾意，但對小部分人有益的事。

許仕仁表示，曾特首提出的改善港台節目的想法，並不是想去更改「前朝」訂立的港台具有編輯自主的規則；相反，政府仍然將維護這些既定的規則。不過，政府希望港台多做一些小眾化的節目，多做多元化的節目。他說：「納稅人出得起錢，也不介意收聽率，最重要是值不值得去做（大眾化的節目）。」

不必太執着收聽率

他認為，港台的領導層自己要考慮一下，多做一些小眾化、多元化的節目，是否會與編輯自主的原則相抵觸。他又稱，港台用的是公帑，具有先天性的優勢，不必太執着於收聽率。

曾蔭權曾指港台作為公營機構，使用公帑，質疑應否轉播賽馬和舉辦十大中文金曲頒獎典禮的活動。事後，曾的言論遭受外界批評，指干預港台的編輯自主，曾蔭權後來回應他是發表個人意見；而港台高層則擬放棄轉播賽馬，但堅持金曲頒獎典禮有續辦的價值。

文匯報

港台須關注小眾利益



關於港台角色問題，政務司司長許仕仁重申，政府必定會維護港台編輯獨立性，但強調港台是動用公帑的政府部門，有先天優勢，不需要過於執着收聽率，可以多作對小眾有益的事情。

不應過分執着收聽率

許仕仁表示，「在過往作為公營廣播機構，是有一套準則、責任及權利，前朝已經寫下來，現時沒有人說要改變這一套，這一套倒是要維護的。」他強調，「絕對不是講編輯獨立主權的問題，亦並非你不可以批評政府的問題，而是多元化一點，不應對收聽率過於執着。」他認為，港台有先天優勢，可多作並非所有人喜歡收聽，但對少部分人有益的東西：「納稅人出得錢，也不跟你計較收聽率，最重要是價值本身問題，是否值得做。」

本報記者

太陽報

港台應小眾多元化

【本報訊】特首曾蔭權在競選期間，公開質疑香港電台應否轉播賽馬及舉辦十大中文金曲頒獎典禮的節目；表示會全力配合特首施政的新任政務司司長許仕仁直言，港台作為公營廣播機構，應多做小眾化及多元化節目，而不是太執着於收聽率做大眾化節目。

許仕仁上任後隨即為「老關」曾蔭權護航，強調特首提出改善港台節目的想法，並不是要改變港台編輯自主的傳統，也不是不容許港台批評政府；但希望港台能多做一些不是所有人都鍾意，或只對小部分人有益的節目。許仕仁說：「納稅人出得起錢，都唔介意收聽率，最重要係值唔值得去做（大眾化的節目）。」

許仕仁更要求港台領導層深思，若多做一些小眾化、多元化節目，是否會與編輯自主的原則相抵觸？他又說，港台用的是公帑，具有先天性優勢，不必太執着於收聽率。他強調，港府無意改變港台編輯自主的規則，只想港台能做一些「對小部分人有益的事」。

曾蔭權批評港台的言論備受外界批評，被質疑干預港台編輯自主，曾其後回應他是發表個人意見；港台擬放棄轉播賽馬，但堅持金曲頒獎典禮有續辦的價值。

會俊華再促多做「小眾節目」

港台駁高官 堅持服務大眾



主管廣播事務的工商及科技局長曾俊華昨日重申，港台應善用公帑，製作高質素的節目。

政情點線面

曾俊華：不應與商業機構競爭

主管港台政策的工商及科技局長曾俊華昨日出席度假回港酒會後，被記者問及港台定位的問題，他說，公營電台應製作小眾節目，更要留意社會上有沒有其他電台提供相類似的節目，不應與商業機構競爭。但記者多次追問港台能否做到有關政策方向，他都沒有正面回應，只重複政策立場。

記者又具體地追問，現時港台電台已有製作金曲頒獎禮等節目，港台應否放

香港電台應否繼續轉播賽馬的爭議帶出港台的定位問題。這日來，由新特首曾蔭權、新政務司長許仕仁，以至昨日就此發言的工商及科技局長曾俊華，都倡議有關公營支持的港台，不應重複商業電台所做的節目，並應多做一些小眾節目。一位有心人向本報記者指出，最高官的言論完全觸犯了港台與政府簽訂的「架構協議」(framework agreement)，因後者明確列出了港台的使命是「服務普羅大眾，同時照顧少數社群的需要」。

策製作兩類節目，以免出現競爭，曾俊華只回答道：「合長(廣播處長朱培慶)好清楚這政策，他會知道怎樣做。」

是否繼續播賽馬復月中決定

其後，港台發言人施永達反駁說，按局長的意思，「難道兩營電台提供新聞報道及時事節目，港台便不應提供這些類型的節目？」他指出，港台節目主要是提供非商業角度的節目，「例如在賽馬節目中，不單只說賽事結果，還會分析賽制，而金曲頒獎禮方面，是推動本

地創作的主要部分。」他又強調，金曲節目多數獲得外界的資助，很少動用公帑。

高永遠這席，現時港台內部正研究是否繼續播賽馬節目，當中包括日後只播放賽果，而非直播所有賽事，以及只在馬場及投注站內播放，而非佔用公眾頻道，最快會在本月中有決定。

高官疑違架構協議

如今關鍵問題是港台的定位，究竟應服務大眾還是小眾呢？按照香港電台官

我們的抱負、使命及信念

成為新媒體環境中舉足輕重的公營廣播機構

- 製作多媒體節目，提供資訊、教育及娛樂；
- 適時與不偏不倚報導本地及國際大事與國際；
- 致力推動香港的多元開放文化；
- 提供自由表達意見的渠道；
- 服務普羅大眾，同時照顧少數社群的需要。

港台使命

香港電台官方網頁所載的港台使命，包括了「服務普羅大眾，同時照顧少數社群的需要」的一條(最末一項)。(網上圖片)

方網頁所載的港台使命，明確包括了「服務普羅大眾，同時照顧少數社群的需要」的一條(見上圖)。據了解，港台與政策局所簽訂的「架構協議」也用上

相同的語句來描述港台的定位。換言之，連日來眾高官對港台定位的言論，確實有違上述宗旨。

明報記者