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Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting

Special meeting on 21 October 2011

**Updated background brief on
New initiatives of Radio Television Hong Kong and issues relating to the
appointment of the Director of Broadcasting**

Purpose

This paper gives a brief summary on the previous discussions by the Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting (the Panel) on issues related to the future operation of Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) and the appointment of the Director of Broadcasting (D of B).

Background

2. Public service broadcasting (PSB) and the future of RTHK has been a matter of public concern for the past 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 PSB 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 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. 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 public service broadcaster. 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.

Discussions at the Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting

3. At the Panel meetings on 5 October and 19 November 2009, 12 April, 31 May, 10 December 2010, 14 February and 14 March 2011, members discussed and received views from deputations on the development of PSB in Hong Kong and related issues on the future of RTHK.

4. At the Panel meeting on 14 February 2011, the Administration briefed the Panel on the comprehensive package to support the development of RTHK as the public service broadcaster for the next few years. On the development of digital terrestrial television service, the Panel noted that a spectrum of ultra-high frequency had been reserved for RTHK, which could accommodate one high-definition television (TV) and two standard-definition TV 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 digital terrestrial television 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 high-definition TV programme channel would broadcast the core productions of RTHK, including informational, educational, cultural and arts programmes, whereas one of the standard-definition TV channels would be used for relaying programmes from China Central Television. The Panel urged RTHK to further extend the coverage of its digital terrestrial television service in future.

5. Some Panel members considered the financial commitment of \$45 million for a three-year trial under the proposed Community Broadcasting Involvement Fund inadequate, given the sheer number of community organizations. Noting that RTHK would work out the details of the community involvement in broadcasting in consultation with the Board of Advisors, with a view to formulating a concrete proposal for public consultation by end-2011, these members opined that all community organizations should be extensively consulted on the proposal. In this connection, the Panel requested the Administration to provide more information on the framework and ground rules for the initiative of community involvement in broadcasting and brief the Panel before its implementation.

6. As regards the development of digital audio broadcasting and measures to promote the use of such service, the Panel noted that four of the new digital audio broadcasting programme channels of RTHK would initially be used for simulcasting the existing four AM channels to improve reception quality, with gradual enhancement of programme content, including the introduction of community involvement in broadcasting. The other digital audio broadcasting programme channel would be used for relaying national

radio programmes. Value-added data service such as news highlights and weather information would also be provided on these receivers. To ensure the smooth rollout of digital audio broadcasting service in Hong Kong, the Administration would study various aspects of the service, including the monitoring of the network coverage, the take-up rate, and formulation of promotion strategy. Some Panel members opined that the proposed mode of development with only three licensees other than RTHK (which already owned many of the AM and FM frequencies) would undermine the effect of diversity of views. These members urged the Administration to develop digital audio broadcasting to encourage the divergence of views in the society.

7. The Panel noted that RTHK would establish a Media Asset Management project starting from 2011-2012 to restore archive materials at risk, digitize the most valuable portion (about 25%) of RTHK archives, and provide specialized storage for the archive materials to facilitate easy access and retrieval. The Panel supported the project and urged the Administration to provide the necessary manpower and funding to expedite the preservation of the programme archive which was of great historical value to avoid the loss of records due to ageing. Some members questioned the basis and the rationale for setting 25% of the total pool of materials as the target of digitization, and expressed grave concern whether assets which reflected the social and political development of Hong Kong would be selectively screened out in the process of digitization. They considered that RTHK should draw up a long-term policy in respect of the safekeeping and disposal of the original copy of the digitized files, and enlist the assistance of historians and archive expertise in determining the materials to be digitized and also advise on proper storage. Instead of keeping the original copies for an indefinite period of time, selected items of public interest should be donated to museums for display for public enjoyment. RTHK should also step up co-operation with the media and communications centre of the universities to make good use of the archive materials for academic studies and historical research. Suggestion was made on the compilation of a comprehensive archive index/catalogue to facilitate reference, access and retrieval by the general public, professional media producers, universities and researchers.

8. On the strengthening of directorate support for RTHK, the Panel noted the proposal of creation of one supernumerary post of Administrative Officer Staff Grade B (AOSGB) as Deputy Director of Broadcasting (DD of B) for three years and one permanent post of Controller (Broadcasting Services). The responsibilities of the proposed post of DD of B would include leading the project on reprovisioning of the Broadcasting House and development works in support of the new digital audio broadcasting and

digital terrestrial television services, while the proposed permanent post of Controller (Broadcasting Services) would be heavily involved in the rollout of community involvement in broadcasting. The Panel supported the staffing proposal and considered that as the way forward for RTHK had become clear, the AOSGB post should be created on a permanent basis to ensure administrative consistency. Panel members also urged the Administration to provide adequate support to the incumbents of the posts. The Administration advised that it would keep in view the development and assess whether the DD of B post should be extended or converted to a permanent post.

9. The Panel was also briefed on the progress of the RTHK promotion and recruitment exercises for the some 80 civil service posts in the Programme Officer (PO) grade. The Panel was concerned that a large number of RTHK staff was employed in the PO grade on non-civil service contract (NCSC) terms, and these staff had to accept a much lower pay if they applied for the civil service posts at the Assistant Programme Officer (APO) rank. Some members considered that the Administration should offer more posts at senior ranks of the PO grade to accommodate the experienced NCSC staff. Representatives of RTHK Programme Staff Union attending the Panel meeting on 14 March 2011 also urged the Administration to open up vacancies at both the basic and promotion ranks of the PO grade to serving NCSC staff, and offer increments based on their experience on appointment. The Administration advised that RTHK would exercise discretion within the scope of the civil service appointment policies and regulations. The Panel subsequently passed a motion urging the Administration to accord priority to serving NCSC staff and formulate a comprehensive plan to retain quality serving staff for RTHK. The Administration's response issued on 6 July 2011 vide LC Paper No. CB(1)2684/10-11(01) is set out in **Appendix I**.

Recent developments

10. On 9 September 2011, the Administration issued a press release on RTHK's development as public service broadcaster and the appointment of D of B. A copy of the press release is in **Appendix II**.

11. At the special meeting of the Panel on 19 September 2011, members expressed concern about the appointment of an Administrative Officer, Mr Roy TANG, as the D of B. The Administration advised that as the post of D of B was a promotional rank, consideration would first be given to filling the post by promotion from a lower rank. As no suitable candidate could be identified through the internal promotion exercise to fill the vacancy at the

promotion rank, the Administration launched an open-cum-in-service recruitment in December 2010 according to established policy and procedures approved by the Public Service Commission. A total of 26 applications were received but no suitable candidate was identified. The Administration stressed that as there was an imminent need to fill the D of B post for leading RTHK to meet the challenges ahead arising from the enhancement of its operation and services in the coming few years, the appointment of an Administrative Officer was a special arrangement and was not intended to become a standing practice.

Latest position

12. The Panel will discuss issues relating to the appointment of D of B on 21 October 2011.

Relevant papers

Legislative Council Brief on public service broadcasting and the future of Radio Television Hong Kong issued on 22 September 2009

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/panels/itb/papers/itb1005-ctbcr9179-e.pdf>

Minutes of Information Technology and Broadcasting Panel meeting on 5 October 2009

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/panels/itb/minutes/itb20091005.pdf>

Minutes of Information Technology and Broadcasting Panel meeting on 19 November 2009

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/english/panels/itb/minutes/itb20091119.pdf>

Information paper provided by the Administration for the Information Technology and Broadcasting Panel meeting on 12 April 2010

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/english/panels/itb/papers/itb0412cb1-1520-5-e.pdf>

Minutes of Information Technology and Broadcasting Panel meeting on 12 April 2010

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/english/panels/itb/minutes/itb20100412.pdf>

Minutes of Information Technology and Broadcasting Panel meeting on 31 May 2010

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/english/panels/itb/minutes/itb20100531.pdf>

The Administration's letter of 3 December 2010 on the proposal to allocate new resources to RTHK as from 2011-2012 for launching various services to fulfil its role and mission as the public service broadcaster of Hong Kong.

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr10-11/english/panels/itb/papers/itbcb1-682-1-e.pdf>

Minutes of Information Technology and Broadcasting Panel meeting on 10 December 2010

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr10-11/english/panels/itb/minutes/itb20101210.pdf>

Hon Paul CHAN Mo-po's question on manpower arrangement of Radio Television Hong Kong at the Council meeting on 5 January 2011

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr10-11/chinese/counmtg/floor/cm0105-confirm-ec.pdf>

Information paper provided by the Administration for the Information Technology and Broadcasting Panel meeting on 14 February 2011

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

Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat for the Information Technology and Broadcasting Panel meeting on 14 February 2011

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr10-11/english/panels/itb/papers/itb0214cb1-1224-6-e.pdf>

Minutes of Information Technology and Broadcasting Panel meeting on 14 February 2011

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr10-11/english/panels/itb/minutes/itb20110214.pdf>

Information paper provided by the Administration for the Information Technology and Broadcasting Panel meeting on 14 March 2011

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr10-11/english/panels/itb/papers/itb0314cb1-1517-10-e.pdf>

Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat for the Information Technology and Broadcasting Panel meeting on 14 March 2011

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr10-11/english/panels/itb/papers/itb0314cb1-1517-11-e.pdf>

Minutes of Information Technology and Broadcasting Panel meeting on 14 March 2011

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr10-11/english/panels/itb/minutes/itb20110314.pdf>

Administration's response to the motion on "Manpower arrangement of Radio Television Hong Kong" passed at the Information Technology and Broadcasting Panel meeting on 14 March 2011

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr10-11/english/panels/itb/papers/itb0314cb1-2684-1-e.pdf>

Press release on RTHK's development as public service broadcaster issued on 9 September 2011

<http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201109/09/P201109090214.htm>

Council Business Division 1
Legislative Council Secretariat
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6 July 2011

Ms Yue Tin-po
Clerk to Panel on
Information Technology and Broadcasting
3/F, Citibank Tower
3 Garden Road
Hong Kong

Dear Ms Yue,

**Motion on “Manpower arrangements of
Radio Television Hong Kong”**

At the Panel meeting held on 14 March 2011, Members passed the following motion –

“That, in connection with the recruitment of staff for Radio Television Hong Kong, this Panel demands that the Administration should:

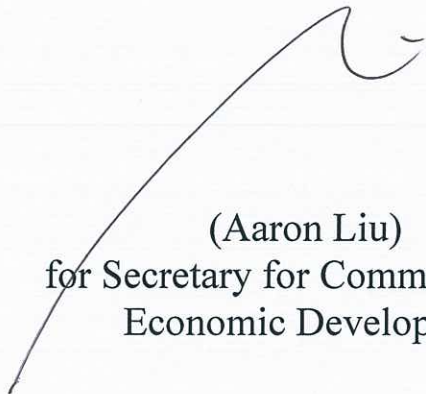
- (a) accord priority to serving non-civil service contract staff and formulate a comprehensive plan to retain quality serving staff;*

- (b) *provide incremental points to experienced staff upon their appointment; and*
- (c) *conduct recruitment exercise for posts at promotion ranks, such as Programme Officer, as well. ”*

The Government's response to the above motion is set out in the **Annex**.

We should be most grateful if you would circulate the above information to Members for their reference. Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a long, sweeping curve that starts from the left and ends with a small loop on the right.

(Aaron Liu)
for Secretary for Commerce and
Economic Development

c.c. Director of Broadcasting

**Motion on “Manpower arrangements of
Radio Television Hong Kong”**

At the meeting of the panel held on 14 March 2011, we briefed Members on the timeframe for proceeding with the recruitment and promotion exercises of the Programme Officer (PO) grade. Since then, Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) has been earnestly taking forward the recruitment and promotion exercises for the PO grade by batches from March 2011.

Progress of recruitment exercises

2. RTHK has by far launched open recruitment exercises for Assistant Programme Officers for various work types including Video Editing, Set Design, Library/Archive, Chinese News, Chinese Radio Programmes, TV Programmes & New Media and Media Management. As at end June, a total of about 12,500 applications have been received. RTHK is now processing the applications received, arranging relevant trade tests as well as selection interviews for the applicants. The possibility of granting Incremental Credit for Experience to candidates with additional relevant experience has been included in the recruitment advertisements where appropriate. RTHK will administer the arrangements in accordance with established mechanism. It will ensure that the recruitment exercises are conducted in a fair and impartial manner and aims to have new recruits reporting duty starting from the last quarter of this year.

3. RTHK has to observe procedural propriety and the principle of fair play in all recruitment exercises. RTHK management cannot undertake that the civil service vacancies concerned will be filled by non-civil service contract (NCSC) staff currently working in RTHK if they have applied for the posts. That said, NCSC staff with working experience in RTHK and proven track records may have a competitive edge in the recruitment exercises because relevant experience and job knowledge as well as good performance records are important aspects for assessment in the recruitment exercises.

Progress of promotion exercises

4. The promotion boards for the ranks of PO and Senior Programme Officer in certain work types have already been convened. RTHK will promulgate the promotion results after completion of necessary formalities (including seeking advice from the Public Service Commission). RTHK will continue to convene promotion boards for other ranks and work types in the coming months. In case the outcome of the promotion exercises clearly indicates that there is insufficient number of suitable officers to fill vacancies at promotional ranks, RTHK management stands ready to consider open recruitment to fill the relevant vacancies at promotional ranks in accordance with established procedures.

5. RTHK's most valuable asset is its own staff. RTHK management attaches great importance to retaining its own talent, and will continue to maintain a close dialogue with the staff union and the staff members concerned with a view to understanding and addressing their concerns.

Commerce and Economic Development Bureau/
Radio Television Hong Kong
July 2011

Press Releases

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Government response on RTHK's development as public service broadcaster

In response to media enquiries on the appointment of the Director of Broadcasting and the development of Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) as the public service broadcaster, a spokesman for the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau said today (September 9) that there was an imminent need to fill the Director of Broadcasting post for leading RTHK to meet the new challenges ahead arising from the enhancement of its operation and services in the next few years.

The spokesman reiterated that the new Director of Broadcasting, Mr Roy Tang, would ensure that the department could effectively fulfil its mission as the public service broadcaster in Hong Kong and will continue to uphold editorial independence for RTHK.

The Government announced in December 2010 a package of arrangements in respect of resources, manpower provision and planning for new services as well as facilities to fully support RTHK's development as the public service broadcaster. The various initiatives have since made satisfactory progress, with details as follows:

(1) Creation of new posts: RTHK will create 26 new posts within this financial year, including two directorate posts, i.e. a three-year supernumerary post of Deputy Director ranked at D3 and a permanent post of Controller (Broadcasting Services) ranked at D1.

(2) Recruitment of civil servants: RTHK resumed recruitment in March this year. Selection interviews for vacancies in certain work types such as set design and video editing have been completed and letters of appointment will be issued soon following completion of relevant procedures. Recruitment for other posts is under way and is expected to finish in the coming months.

(3) Internal promotion: To groom talent from within the department, RTHK will fill vacancies in senior positions through established mechanisms. The promotion board for the vacancy of Deputy Director will be convened in September. Promotion exercises for other ranks (including Controller (Broadcasting Services)) and streams are being taken forward.

(4) Digital audio broadcasting (DAB) services: RTHK and three licensed commercial broadcasters plan to launch DAB services at the end of this year. RTHK will provide five programme channels and preparation for the service roll-out is in full gear.

(5) Digital terrestrial television (DTT) services: The Government has allocated funding for RTHK to acquire additional equipment and facilities and to increase the production of high-definition programmes. RTHK's current target is to conduct technical trials for DTT in mid-2012.

(6) Media Asset Management system: The Government has set aside about \$100 million for RTHK to establish a Media Asset Management

system. Phase I development of the system has begun and it is targeted to commence operation by the end of this year. The archive restoration project has started, including making preparations to set up a workshop at Rumsey Street and recruitment of staff.


(7) Community Broadcasting Involvement Fund: The Government has earmarked \$45 million for a three-year trial under the fund. RTHK is deliberating the details involved in consultation with the Board of Advisors, and will consult the public at the end of this year.

(8) Reprovisioning of new Broadcasting House: The technical feasibility study has been completed. Rezoning of the selected site is under way and public feedback collected from the consultation completed in early September on the building of the new Broadcasting House at Tseung Kwan O is positive. RTHK will work out arrangements for the design and building as well as tendering of the new Broadcasting House.

The new Director of Broadcasting, Mr Roy Tang, will assume duty on September 15. Starting from the same day, the Deputy Director of Broadcasting, Mr Gordon Leung, will take up the new post of Deputy Director of Broadcasting (Developments) while the Assistant Director of Broadcasting, Mr Tai Keen-man, will act as the Deputy Director of Broadcasting (Programmes).

Ends/Friday, September 9, 2011
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