

LCQ20: Work of dedicated team to review governance and management of RTHK

Following is a question by the Hon Charles Mok and a written reply by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Edward Yau, in the Legislative Council today (October 21):

Question:

In the middle of this year, the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development announced the establishment of a dedicated team to review the governance and management of Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK). Some members of the public are concerned about whether the authorities will, through the dedicated team, require RTHK to practise self-censorship in personnel management and programme production, thus undermining editorial independence and the public's right to know, affecting the public interest, and tarnishing Hong Kong's image as a free and open society. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of meetings convened by the dedicated team to date since the commencement of its work in mid-July this year, as well as the agendas of and attendees at each of the meetings;

(2) whether it will make public the work and minutes of meetings of the dedicated team; if so, when these will be made public; and

(3) whether it will enhance the transparency of the work of the dedicated team (e.g. by seeking public views or holding online public hearings) to enable various stakeholders to monitor the work of the dedicated team and directly give their views to the dedicated team, so that the viewpoints of RTHK staff and listeners/audiences can be effectively reflected in the reports and recommendations submitted by the team; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Our consolidated reply to the various parts of the question raised by the Member is as follows:

(1) to (3) The dedicated team established by the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau (CEDB) started its work on July 15, 2020, to review the governance and management of the Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) and provide recommendations on its overall management systems, processes and practices, with a view to ensuring full compliance with the Charter of RTHK, the codes of practice on programming standards issued by the Communications Authority, and all applicable Government rules and regulations.

The dedicated team, in the course of the review, frequently meets and communicates in writing with the relevant officers of RTHK, with a view to understanding the operational needs of the department. One of the deputy directors of the dedicated team is an Assistant Director of Broadcasting, who is familiar with RTHK's operation and capable of assisting the dedicated team to understand the actual situation of the department. As the review is on internal governance and management matters of a government department, it does not involve soliciting opinion from audience/listeners. The dedicated team will also not take part in any programme production nor editorial decisions of RTHK.

The review is expected to be completed in about six months, and the dedicated team will submit a report to the CEDB.