

SCED speaks on AmCham survey and RTHK

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Edward Yau, on issues relating to a survey by the American Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong (AmCham) and Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) at a media session after attending the Legislative Council meeting today (May 12):

Reporter: Secretary, according to an AmCham survey, more than 40 per cent of the AmCham members said that they want or are planning to leave Hong Kong, citing the discomfort with the national security law (NSL). What is the Government's response to that fear and concern over the NSL? The second question is regarding RTHK. The inability of RTHK to broadcast the Olympic Games ... Why can't the Government just give the resources to RTHK, so that it can also broadcast the Games?

Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development: On the first question, from time to time, we have seen different chambers issuing different surveys. We are grateful for the chambers to feel the pulse of the international business community in Hong Kong. In the last two years, I was the receiving end of many international business communities, (who had been) giving me direct views and responses to the situation of Hong Kong. We had been on quite a rough ride back in 2019, and most chambers came to me to ask a question: When could the riots and instability in Hong Kong end? That was the concern. After the NSL was introduced, we have seen stability being brought back. They are grateful. At the time when the national security law was introduced, we have taken the steps to give full and thorough explanation to the foreign community in Hong Kong, letting them better understand the need and the content of the law.

Different business entities would have different reasons to stay or otherwise, but figures speak for themselves. Every year, we conduct an actual survey on the number of overseas firms using Hong Kong as regional headquarters or regional offices. That number has been maintaining on quite a steady level. Last year, there were over 9,000 companies remaining in Hong Kong, which is basically more or less the same as the year before. Of course, there is no ground for complacency. We believe that business decisions would best be made by people who are actually staying and operating here in Hong Kong. I also learn from similar surveys that the majority of foreign firms still believe that Hong Kong is the place for doing business, particularly with the opening up of opportunities from the GBA (the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area) development, the Belt and Road Initiative and also recently the national policy in designating Hong Kong as a very important partner as the Chinese enterprises going out. I think it is a two-way street. In the Hong Kong formula, foreign firms in Hong Kong is a very important component. We will continue to monitor the situation and provide the best help we can offer.

On your question on RTHK, the obtaining of broadcasting right for Tokyo

Olympics is an important government decision. In the usual circumstances, this job is done by licensed TV stations because they are by and large commercial decisions to bid for the broadcasting right as they can, through presenting their services, earn advertising revenue.

There are exceptional circumstances like this one. There have been a lot of uncertainties to the extent that there are worries that there might not be a commercial entity in Hong Kong willing to bid for this broadcasting right. As a result, the government stepped in. Of course, the government's step in must be based on the public interest. The public interest, in this particular case, is the worry of no broadcasting directly, and it is also the common aspiration of the Hong Kong community to have live broadcast so as to be able to give their fullest support to our athletes attending the Olympics. For this reason, the Home Affairs Bureau has taken the lead to negotiate with Dentsu Inc to obtain the right.

Essentially, the live broadcast of the Olympics would still be very much done by the commercial operators and through which they can earn their revenue. There is no need for the RTHK, as a public broadcaster, to put duplicate resources into the production of such programmes.

We are not saying that RTHK is deprived of the right. As part of the deal, RTHK will be given footage by the commercial operators so that they can also produce programmes without committing additional resources. Also, given the very tight schedule and taking into policy consideration, I think it is the best deal also allowing commercial enterprises, in the long run, to continue to use their way to obtain broadcasting right for major events. At the same time, it can cater for the public's aspiration and demand. I think this is the essence of the whole policy.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)