

SCED speaks on RTHK

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Edward Yau, on the Communications Authority (CA)'s decision regarding complaints against the Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) TV programme "Headliner" at a media session at the Legislative Council building today (May 20):

Reporter: ... (inaudible) on the incident of the "Headliner" as well as your comments, do you think that has done more good than harm to the freedom of speech in Hong Kong, and even to the operation of RTHK now?

Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development: First of all, freedom of speech has always been protected under the Basic Law for all broadcasting operators, of course, including RTHK. But RTHK is also a public broadcaster which needs to fulfil its obligations, particularly those stipulated under the Charter of RTHK. Among the obligations, RTHK is under the arrangement that its programmes will be subject to the Communications Authority's jurisdiction regarding the handling of complaints against them. The Communications Authority is a statutory, independent body which applies the same rule on all public and private broadcasters in Hong Kong. When they receive a complaint, they will handle it in a fair manner. I believe in recent cases where the CA passed the verdicts against RTHK, dual recognition had been given to the entire process, and in the process, RTHK was allowed to make representation. So I think there would be a fair treatment to all the complaints. But I would also urge RTHK to take the matter seriously, and to review whether there are scope for improvement on its management and governance, and also in full compliance of the Charter of RTHK.

Reporter: ... (inaudible) meeting with RTHK's Board of Advisors, what matters are you going to discuss in the meeting?

Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development: I am accepting the request by the Board of Advisors, set up under the RTHK Charter, to meet with them. The Board of Advisors has a unique role under the Charter, because it is specifically set up to offer advice to RTHK, in particular on editorial principles, and also the standards and quality of programming. These are areas that the Board of Advisors could offer valuable advice to RTHK, and ensure that they fulfil the stipulations in the Charter. I'm happy to see them tomorrow and to hear from them about their views, perhaps in the light of the recent incidents regarding RTHK.

Reporter: ... (inaudible) may have concerns that this ruling will have chilling effects on satirical shows like other programmes... (inaudible)

Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development: I think the verdict of the Communications Authority on RTHK's programme is a fair and impartial judgement. We shouldn't be looking at it from any angles other than giving a fair comment on the incident itself. As I reiterated time and again, the CA's

verdict applies not just to RTHK, but all broadcasters in Hong Kong, because they do this in accordance with the law, and also within their power. And RTHK, under its Charter, also submits itself to the surveillance of the CA in this regard. The process also respects natural justice, whereby complaints are being looked into and the complainants and also the subject of the complaint are given a chance to make representations. So after the due process is finished, I think people should look at it in a fair manner. Thank you.

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