

Government establishes dedicated team to review RTHK's governance and management

The Commerce and Economic Development Bureau (CEDB) announced today (May 28) that the Government will establish a dedicated team to review the governance and management of Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) so as to ensure that its public broadcasting services fully abide by the Charter of RTHK (the Charter).

"The management and the programme contents of RTHK has aroused wide public concern recently. The Audit Commission made a number of key recommendations on RTHK in October 2018 regarding its low TV ratings and public awareness, programme performance evaluation, procurement of survey services, and engagement of contract staff/service providers. These Audit recommendations are not yet fully implemented," a spokesman for the CEDB said.

"The Communications Authority (CA) also gave a serious warning to RTHK for its TV programme 'Pentaprism' broadcast on November 20, 2019, and a warning for the 'Headliner' broadcast on February 14, 2020, urging RTHK to strictly observe the Generic Code of Practice on Television Programme Standards.

"The CEDB took the view that RTHK must address the public concern over its programmes as well as the department's governance and management. RTHK must follow up on the matters in a proactive and positive manner, and conduct a review to ensure that it fully abides by the Charter, duly meets its responsibility as a public service broadcaster and strictly complies with the relevant codes of practice issued by the CA. The establishment of the review team will help RTHK carry out these tasks," the spokesman said.

RTHK is a government department under the policy purview and housekeeping oversight of the CEDB as stipulated in paragraphs 10 to 12 of the Charter. The review team will be led by a senior directorate officer and comprise officers from various grades of the Government. It will report to the Permanent Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development (Communications and Creative Industries).

The scope of the review is as follows:

(1) to review RTHK's administration, including financial control, human resources management and procurement matters to ensure that its manpower and resource deployment complies with all applicable Government rules and regulations, and that such deployment is made for the effective delivery of services under programme areas as set out in paragraphs 17 to 20 of the Charter, and where necessary, to identify scope for improvement;

(2) to review RTHK's progress of implementing the recommendations of the Report No. 71 of the Director of Audit, including the need for a transparent and objective system for setting performance targets and benchmarks for measuring results; and

(3) to review RTHK's overall management systems, processes and practices, making reference to best practices of other public service broadcasters, to ensure full compliance with the Charter and the codes of practice on programming standards issued by the CA.

"The review will commence in mid-2020 and is expected to be completed by the end of this year. The review team will submit a report to the CEDB upon completion of its work. The Director of Broadcasting will provide full support to the exercise. Members of the review team will not take part in any programme production or editorial decisions of RTHK," the spokesman said.