

## Proposal of RTHK on Digital Audio Broadcasting

1. RTHK welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Consultation Paper on Digital Terrestrial Broadcasting in Hong Kong and make proposals on the development of DAB.
2. RTHK supports the liberal policy of separating the licensing and regulatory framework for the transmission and content provision of audio and data. This will encourage the participation of new content providers in delivering innovative data services in addition to quality audio services. It will also alleviate their burden on investment in DAB transmission facilities.
3. RTHK has no objection to the prudent policy of delaying licence applications until the market potential of DAB becomes clearer, the cost of DAB receivers is reduced, and penetration of DAB services picks up momentum. Pending this, we propose that the existing DAB multiplex and facilities be assigned to RTHK now for relaying the radio services of Radios 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and Putonghua. The justifications are :-
  - a) In line with the HKSAR Government's vision to enhance and promote Hong Kong's infrastructure and services to create a leading digital city in the globally connected world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the public broadcaster should take the initiative to provide the public with digital audio services.
  - b) RTHK will use a digital platform to develop audio and data services for the public. We will co-operate with market driven content providers and equipment suppliers in evaluating and promoting innovative data services in an environment characterized by dense and high-rise buildings. Without such assistance from the government, new entrants may encounter practical difficulties in effectively testing and launching audio or data services in Hong Kong.

4. RTHK proposes an agenda of activities :-
- a) The DAB trial chaired by ITBB should be concluded because the DAB technical feasibility in Hong Kong was explored and its limitations were identified. Any unspent amount in the DAB trial is to be refunded to the commercial broadcasters. The broadcasters will be set free from the obligations of the DAB Memorandum of Understanding. They will be able to set their own pace in DAB development and form business ventures with potential partners. RTHK will be able to assist potential entrants into data and audio services on an impartial basis.
  - b) The equipment of the DAB trial should be returned to RTHK and a DAB frequency be assigned to RTHK. In view of the poor reception and inferior quality of AM services territory wide (Radio 3, Radio 5 and Putonghua) and poor reception of FM in some areas, RTHK proposes to relay six services (Radio 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and Putonghua) in the DAB multiplex.
  - c) The DAB service will initially be transmitted from Mount Gough to keep the public alert to the introduction of digital audio broadcasting in Hong Kong. The large audience which suffers from poor AM/FM reception may switch to the new service when the DAB receivers become more affordable.
  - d) RTHK will extend its DAB service to Beacon Hill to cover Shatin and improve the reception in Hong Kong and Kowloon when the DAB listenership grows. This will involve a cost of recovering the data link from Mount Gough and reactivating the low power transmitter at Beacon Hill.
  - e) RTHK will extend its data service to the DAB channels when the receivers in the market are supplied with data and image displays. This will involve a cost of relocating the audio and data encoding equipment from Mount Gough to Broadcasting House and provisioning new data links.
  - f) RTHK will consider an extension of the DAB service territory wide, or an expansion of DAB service into a new multiplex, when the DAB market penetration is mature and innovative data services are available.