

Media and Communications

Hong Kong's lively media and world-class telecommunications provide ready access to a wealth of information and entertainment. Some 675 daily newspapers and periodicals are published in Hong Kong, more than 92 per cent of households are broadband service subscribers and the mobile subscriber penetration rate is about 248 per cent.

Hong Kong has one of the most successful telecommunications markets in the world. Fully liberalised and highly competitive, the market provides a wide range of innovative and advanced telecommunications services to consumers and business users. The city also has a long history of film production and a vibrant broadcasting industry.

Mass Media

Hong Kong's mass media at the end of 2017 included 68 daily newspapers (including electronic newspapers), 607 periodicals, three domestic free-television programme service licensees, two domestic pay-TV programme service licensees, 15 non-domestic TV programme service licensees, one government-funded public service broadcaster and two sound broadcasting licensees.

The availability of the latest telecommunications technology and keen interest in Hong Kong's affairs have attracted many international news agencies, newspapers with international readership and international broadcasters to establish regional headquarters or representative offices here. The production of regional publications in Hong Kong underlines its importance as a financial, industrial, trading and communications centre.

Registered Hong Kong-based press at the year end included 37 Chinese-language dailies, 13 English-language dailies, 13 bilingual dailies and five in Japanese. One of the English dailies publishes a daily Braille edition in conjunction with the Hong Kong Society for the Blind. Of the Chinese-language dailies, 31 cover mainly local and international news, and the remaining ones specialise in other subjects such as financial news. The larger newspapers include overseas Chinese communities in their distribution networks and some have editions printed outside Hong Kong, particularly in Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Hong Kong is the regional base for international titles including *The New York Times* International Edition, *Financial Times*, *The Nikkei*, *The Wall Street Journal* and *USA Today International*. Global wire services with significant operations in Hong Kong include Agence France-Presse, Bloomberg, Dow Jones and Thomson Reuters. International broadcasters with studios in Hong Kong include Channel News Asia, CNBC, CNN and Phoenix TV.

Several organisations represent people working in Hong Kong's news media. The Newspaper Society of Hong Kong represents Chinese and English newspaper proprietors. It is empowered to act in matters that affect the interests of its members.

The Hong Kong Journalists Association is the biggest industry-wide union of journalists and one of the most active. Formed in 1968, it has more than 700 members. It pays special attention to press freedom and ethics concerns, professional training and the well-being of journalists.

Other media organisations include the Hong Kong Federation of Journalists, Hong Kong News Executives' Association, Hong Kong Press Photographers Association and Foreign Correspondents' Club.

The Vocational Training Council's Media and Communications Training Board works with trade bodies such as the Association of Accredited Advertising Agencies of Hong Kong, Hong Kong Advertisers Association, Hong Kong News Executives' Association, Journalism Education Foundation and Newspaper Society of Hong Kong to run training programmes for media, advertising and public relations professionals to improve their skills.

Dissemination of Government Information

The Secretary for Home Affairs oversees the policy on dissemination of government information, while the Director of Information Services advises the government on the presentation of its policies and on public relations matters generally, in Hong Kong and overseas. The main aims are to ensure an open exchange of information in the community, to keep the media fully informed of government plans, policies and activities, and to promote Hong Kong's image abroad.

Information Services Department

The Information Services Department (ISD) is the government's public relations consultant, news agency, publisher and advertising agent, providing a link between the government and the media and, through the latter, enhancing public understanding of government policies, decisions and activities. The department has four divisions: Local Public Relations, Publicity and Promotions, Public Relations Outside Hong Kong, and Administration.

Local Public Relations Division

The division oversees the work of Information Grade officers who serve as Press Secretaries to Principal Officials or work in the 34 information and public relations units in bureaus and departments. They help formulate and implement public relations and publicity strategies, advise their bureau or department heads on public relations matters, answer media enquiries,

prepare press releases, and organise press conferences, interviews and special promotional activities.

The News Sub-division operates a 24-hour media enquiry service. During typhoons and other emergencies, the ISD's Combined Information Centre coordinates responses to media enquiries and disseminates information and public announcements.

The Government News and Media Information System gives journalists online access to press releases, photographs and video clips through a single interface. All press releases are available on the internet, while major government press conferences and events, including the Chief Executive's annual Policy Address and the Financial Secretary's Budget Speech, are webcast live.

The news.gov.hk website publishes government news and information daily in a dynamic multimedia fashion. Over 6,800 news and feature stories and some 1,550 video highlights were posted in 2017. News items and messages are also disseminated through smartphones, mobile devices and social media, including Facebook, Instagram, WeChat, Twitter, Weibo and YouTube. More than 594 million page views were recorded in 2017.

The Media Research Sub-division keeps the government informed of public opinion expressed in the mass news media. It produces daily media summaries reflecting public views and editorial comments in the Chinese and English newspapers as well as special reports on subjects of interest to the government.

Publicity and Promotions Division

The division helps bureaus and departments mount publicity campaigns and promotion drives and is responsible for advertising, creative design, photography, videography and the production of a range of government publications. Major local campaigns conducted or supported by the division in 2017 included the celebration of the 20th Anniversary of the Establishment of the HKSAR, Next Generation Smart Identity Card System project and territory-wide identity card replacement exercise, voter registration, anti-drug efforts, environmental protection, road safety and the fight against crime.

The division also helps organise major promotional activities such as exhibitions, cultural performances, film festivals and media partnerships overseas and on the Mainland.

The division handles more than 3,000 titles and produces a wide variety of government publications, including this yearbook and its internet and tablet versions. Each year, the division distributes a large number of free publications, including fact sheets, brochures and posters. The division sells photographs at the Photo Library and, in August, launched an online photo sales system for the public to access the department's substantial archive of historical and topical photos more easily. Through its sales outlet and online bookstore, over 50,300 government books and miscellaneous printed items were sold in 2017.

Public Relations Outside Hong Kong Division

The division helps develop and implement the government's public relations strategy outside Hong Kong, working closely with the government's offices overseas, on the Mainland and in

Taiwan. Its Overseas Public Relations Sub-division promotes and monitors Hong Kong's image overseas and liaises closely with some 80 foreign media organisations based in Hong Kong, handling press enquiries, disseminating news and arranging briefings and interviews. It also runs a programme for visiting journalists and produces summaries of overseas reports on Hong Kong. In addition, it coordinates and implements overseas publicity projects to tie in with senior officials' visits abroad.

The Brand Hong Kong Management Unit handles the Brand Hong Kong programme, promoting Hong Kong as Asia's world city locally and around the world. To ensure the brand's consistent application, the unit develops advertising campaigns and publicity material in print and electronic formats to support the government's Economic and Trade Offices' activities, senior officials' visits and major promotional programmes outside Hong Kong. The unit also seeks opportunities to highlight the brand and collaborates with organisers of major events of international significance in Hong Kong to bolster the city's image. Hong Kong's strengths and advantages are also promoted through social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram and YouTube.

The Visits and International Conferences Sub-division runs the ISD's Sponsored Visitors Programme for opinion formers, political leaders and think-tank members to visit Hong Kong to enhance their understanding of the city. The sub-division also helps line up meetings for influential visitors on trips to Hong Kong. In addition, it provides assistance in the outbound visits of senior government officials to other economies.

Promoting Hong Kong Worldwide

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government's offices overseas and on the Mainland, as well as the Hong Kong Economic, Trade and Cultural Office in Taiwan, play an important role in promoting Hong Kong globally. Hong Kong's image is promoted through regular meetings with counterparts and contacts in territories covered by the offices, visits by senior Hong Kong officials, and cultural and sporting events such as film festivals, exhibitions, performances by Hong Kong artistes and dragon boat racing.

Europe

In 2017, the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office (ETO) in Brussels organised the visit of the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Gregory So Kam-leung, to Milan to promote creative industries, and to The Hague and Schiphol to advance business opportunities. The Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Lau Kong-wah, opened the Hong Kong pavilion at the Venice Biennale.

To celebrate the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the HKSAR, the office hosted martial arts-themed gala dinners in Paris and Brussels inspired by the novels of Jin Yong. The Chinese Culinary Institute prepared a menu based on mythical dishes in *The Legend of the Condor Heroes*, while athletes from the Hong Kong Wushu Union gave performances. A week-long exchange programme was organised in Belgium for a group of 20 twenty-year-olds from Hong Kong to broaden their horizons. Other celebration events included concerts by the Asian Youth

Orchestra in Toulouse and Brussels, and by the Hong Kong Festival Youth Wind Orchestra in Barcelona.

The excellence of Hong Kong films was showcased at festivals in Amsterdam, Barcelona, Brussels, Florence, Salento, Sitges, Thessaloniki, Vic, Paris and Udine, the last two presenting the retrospective 'Creative Visions: Hong Kong Cinema 1997-2017'.

The Brussels office was also the title sponsor of Hong Kong's dragon boat competitions in Antwerp and Dublin, featuring performances by S/L/A/S/H of the Hong Kong Rope Skipping Academy.

In 2017, the London ETO organised eight visits by HKSAR Government principal officials to countries under its purview, including a visit to the UK by the new Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam Cheng Yuet-ngor.

The London office organised and supported various cultural and business events to celebrate Hong Kong's 20th anniversary. These included gala dinners, receptions, business seminars, film festivals, music, theatre and dance performances, a fashion show and art exhibitions across the countries under its purview; as well as a Dragon Boat Festival in London. It took part in the London Lord Mayor's Show. In addition, for the sixth time it held a competition to encourage UK students to study in Hong Kong.

During the year, the Berlin ETO celebrated the HKSAR's 20th anniversary in Central and Eastern Europe. The activities organised included the 'Constructing Culture' exhibition, about the West Kowloon Cultural District project, at Berlin's international architectural forum Aedes; another exhibition at the Communications Museum of Berlin, entitled 'Let's Play Ping Pong!', featuring the works of young Hong Kong comic artists; a new Cantonese version of William Shakespeare's *Macbeth* performed by Tang Shu-wing Theatre Studio in Berlin, Vienna and Warsaw; gala events in Berlin, Budapest and Geneva showcasing Hong Kong cuisines prepared by the Chinese Culinary Institute; and screenings of Hong Kong films at film festivals in Austria, Czechia, Germany, Hungary, Poland and Switzerland.

To promote opportunities under the Belt and Road Initiative, the Berlin office and the Law Society of Hong Kong jointly presented the strengths of Hong Kong's professional services in Hungary and Poland.

North America

In 2017, the ETO in Washington, DC, organised the visit of the Financial Secretary, Mr Paul Chan Mo-po, including a conference and luncheon co-organised with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace to mark the HKSAR's 20th anniversary.

A black-tie gala dinner was hosted as part of the anniversary celebrations, featuring performances by tenor Warren Mok and the International Chamber Orchestra of America.

The Washington office also presented the 22nd Annual 'Made in Hong Kong' Film Festival, co-sponsored by the Smithsonian Institution. The event featured appearances by director Wong Chun and screenwriter Florence Chan.

In the eastern US, the New York ETO promoted, under the theme of the anniversary celebrations, the tremendous progress Hong Kong had made since 1997 to become the most vibrant international financial and business hub in Asia. Through 20 visits to 13 states and more than 20 big events, the office reached out to financial, business, political and government leaders; major think tanks; and key media, arts and cultural institutions.

The phenomenal year began with a bang as the New York office sponsored international fashion designer Ms Vivienne Tam's Hong Kong-inspired collection. To highlight more of Hong Kong's soft strengths, the office supported Hong Kong film festivals in New York City and Chicago, introduced a young crop of actors and filmmakers to US audiences, promoted the Asian Youth Orchestra's tours in North Carolina and New York, and supported the debut recital of musicians and works of composers.

With the office's support, two Hong Kong rugby youth teams took part for the first time in the Hell Gate Sevens in New York. US collegiate and high school rugby teams competed for HKSAR anniversary tournament trophies in Philadelphia and New York City. The office also sponsored anniversary races at the Hong Kong dragon boat festivals in New York City, Atlanta, Boston, Chicago and Philadelphia.

The year 2017 saw many varied programmes organised by the San Francisco ETO to celebrate the HKSAR's 20th anniversary. Kicking off the celebrations was a one-of-a-kind art installation by artist Freeman Lau. Six vase-shaped bamboo lanterns of up to six metres stood proudly outside the City Hall of San Francisco for almost three months, showcasing unique Hong Kong craftsmanship.

Besides gala receptions in four cities, the office presented a special concert, *A Musical Journey*, at the historic Herbst Theatre in San Francisco and the prestigious Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles. The Hong Kong Oratorio Society partnered with San Francisco Bay Area's Voices of the Valley for the first time to perform in California, and its Chinese Music Ensemble performed at the Dallas reception. A 'Hong Kong Showcase' in Seattle and nine other film festivals presented or supported by the office across five US states entertained filmgoers.

Other major events included a business leadership luncheon on Hong Kong's innovation and technology, and a Hong Kong Young Entrepreneur Competition launched to let US college students learn more about Hong Kong's start-up ecosystem. Five students won a week-long trip to experience Hong Kong first-hand.

In another first, a youth team from Hong Kong joined the Hong Kong-Northern California International Dragon Boat Festival, where anniversary banners filled the venue.

The Toronto ETO organised a series of events to celebrate the HKSAR's 20th anniversary. It hosted two gala dinners in Toronto and Vancouver to showcase Hong Kong's achievements in

the past 20 years. The dinner in Toronto presented cuisines prepared by a culinary master from Hong Kong and the one in Vancouver was graced by the Chief Justice of the Court of Final Appeal, Mr Geoffrey Ma Tao-li, as the keynote speaker.

Other celebrations included a Toronto business seminar to promote Hong Kong's business advantages, two film festivals in Toronto and Vancouver to present 'Hong Kong Cinema 1997-2017', academic seminars, and painting and photo exhibitions.

Hong Kong performing groups, including Zuni Icosahedron, Rhythm & Tempo and Chung Ying Theatre, also staged performances and an exhibition which highlighted Hong Kong arts talent. Newspaper supplements were published to highlight the successful implementation of 'one country, two systems'.

Northeast Asia

The Tokyo ETO represents Hong Kong to promote closer economic and trade ties as well as cultural exchanges with Japan and South Korea. The arts and cultural events it presents or supports include a Spring Reception in Tokyo, a Special Focus on Hong Kong films at the Osaka Asian Film Festival and the Hong Kong Cup Student Ambassadors English Programme for university students in Japan.

In 2017, the Tokyo office celebrated the HKSAR's 20th anniversary by organising a Hong Kong Cup dragon boat race in Yokohama, gala dinners and receptions in Tokyo and Seoul, a miniature exhibition in Tokyo, a design exhibition in Seoul, a fashion show during Tokyo Fashion Week and a Hong Kong Night reception at the Busan International Film Festival. It also supported performances in Japan and Korea by the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra, Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, Asian Youth Orchestra, City Contemporary Dance Company and Romer String Quartet.

The office made arrangements for the Financial Secretary to visit Tokyo, as well as Yokohama and Jeju to attend, respectively, annual meetings of the Asian Development Bank and the Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank. It also arranged the Secretary for Home Affairs' Kyoto trip.

Southeast Asia

The Singapore ETO fosters bilateral relations between Hong Kong and six Association of the Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries, namely Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. In 2017, the office organised and supported 12 visits to these states by the Chief Executive; the Financial Secretary; the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Mr James Henry Lau Jr; the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong; the Secretary for the Civil Service, Mr Joshua Law Chi-kong; the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan; the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan Siu-chee; the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Edward Yau Tang-wah; and the Secretary for Education, Mr Kevin Yeung Yun-hung. It also organised a Belt and Road Seminar in Thailand to promote economic cooperation.

To promote Hong Kong and mark the HKSAR's 20th anniversary, the ETO organised and supported many events in Singapore, Thailand and Cambodia, ranging from receptions,

business seminars and gala dinners to orchestral performances, dance, drama, visual art and photo exhibitions, and sports events. The office also extended the theme 'Together • Progress • Opportunity' to cover Hong Kong's bilateral ties with the ASEAN countries.

The office offers the ASEAN Internship Scheme for Hong Kong Higher Education Students to broaden the perspectives of tertiary students from eight University Grants Committee-funded institutions, the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, Hong Kong Shue Yan University and Hang Seng Management College. In 2017, it helped about 150 students take up internships in eight ASEAN countries.

The Jakarta ETO, which began operation in June 2016, represents the HKSAR Government in matters with ASEAN as a whole, and with the individual ASEAN countries of Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam and the Philippines.

In 2017, the office continued to establish its network in the four countries through meeting different interlocutors. It also supported five visits by the Financial Secretary; the Secretary for Justice, Mr Rimsky Yuen Kwok-keung; the Secretary for Development, Mr Michael Wong Wai-lun; and the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development to foster bilateral relations.

HKSAR anniversary activities included a photo exhibition and dragon boat festival in Indonesia, as well as gala dinners and business seminars to promote Hong Kong and the Belt and Road Initiative in all four countries. The office also held Chinese New Year receptions, outreach seminars and market visits to second-tier cities in Indonesia such as Bandung and Surabaya to promote Hong Kong's advantages.

Australia and New Zealand

The Sydney ETO promotes Hong Kong in Australia and New Zealand. It participates in high-profile events, including the City of Sydney Chinese New Year Dragon Boat Races and Auckland Lantern Festival, and organises career talks in Sydney, Canberra and Auckland to attract overseas talent to opportunities in Hong Kong. On the business front, the office supports the Hong Kong Australia Business Association and Hong Kong New Zealand Business Association to organise trade events highlighting Hong Kong's advantages.

In 2017, the office organised the Sydney visit of the Secretary for Innovation and Technology, Mr Nicholas W Yang. Celebrations for the HKSAR's 20th anniversary kicked off with the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra's premiere performances in Sydney and Melbourne, and showcased the strengths of Hong Kong from finance to the food culture. The office brought in children, youths, businessmen and performing groups from Hong Kong to mark this memorable occasion with people in Australia and New Zealand.

Mainland and Taiwan

On the Mainland, celebrations of the HKSAR's 20th anniversary were spearheaded by the Beijing Office and the four Hong Kong ETOs in Chengdu, Guangdong, Shanghai and Wuhan. The Beijing Office organised the 'Together • Progress • Opportunity – Exhibition in Celebration of the 20th Anniversary of the Return of Hong Kong to the Motherland' at the National Museum of China and roving exhibitions of the same theme in provinces, municipalities and autonomous

regions under its purview. The exhibition was also staged by each of the four ETOs in their respective regions, reaching the residents of many Mainland cities.

In other celebratory activities, the Chengdu ETO organised gala dinners, cultural performances, a film festival, a competition and campus activities in different municipalities, and co-produced with the Sichuan Radio and Television a TV series named *Sichuan-Hong Kong Cooperation: New Silk Road*. The Guangdong ETO organised the 'Hong Kong Retrospective Film Show for HKSAR's 20th Anniversary' and a photography competition in Guangzhou, and arts and cultural performances in Guangdong, Fuzhou, Xiamen and Nanning. The Shanghai ETO organised a series of cultural events including performances by the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra, Hong Kong Ballet and Jazz Band in the eastern region. The Wuhan ETO and its Hunan and Henan Liaison Units organised the visits of the Financial Secretary to Wuhan, Changsha and Zhengzhou, *Symphony Concert by Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra* in Wuhan, *Hong Kong Pianist Dr Vivian Cheng – Piano Recital* in Changsha, *Romantic Classics – Cello Recital by Trey Lee* in Wuhan, Changsha and Zhengzhou, and gala dinners in Wuhan, Changsha and Zhengzhou. Designated webpages, radio programmes and Hong Kong-themed TV episodes were also arranged.

The Beijing office and ETOs on the Mainland organise visits and seminars for Hong Kong business delegations. The investment promotion divisions of these offices promote Hong Kong's business advantages, and liaise closely with Mainland enterprises that intend to invest in Hong Kong and help them set up businesses here.

In Taiwan, the Hong Kong Economic, Trade and Cultural Office maintains contacts with various sectors in different cities and counties to strengthen two-way economic, trade and cultural exchanges, promote Hong Kong, and help Taiwanese enterprises set up businesses in Hong Kong. During the year, the Taiwan office organised the 'Hong Kong Now' roving exhibition, introducing Hong Kong's green living, traditional customs as well as arts and culture, and a Hong Kong-Taiwan Economic Cooperation Forum about the internet of things and the start-up ecosystem. The Hong Kong-Taiwan Cultural Cooperation Committee also organised the Hong Kong Week in Taipei, a series of cultural and creative programmes featuring Hong Kong characteristics.

Code on Access to Government Information

As an open and accountable government, all bureaux and departments make information available to the public according to the Code on Access to Information. The code stipulates that bureaux and departments should work on the basis that information requested will be released, and sets out the grounds on which disclosure may be refused. The public may complain to the Ombudsman if any bureau or department does not comply with the provisions of the code.

Communications Authority

The Communications Authority (CA), an independent statutory body established under the Communications Authority Ordinance, is the unified regulatory body for Hong Kong's broadcasting and telecommunications industries. The CA comprises 10 non-officials from various sectors of the community and two public officers. It regulates the industries according

to the Broadcasting Ordinance, Telecommunications Ordinance, Communications Authority Ordinance, Broadcasting (Miscellaneous Provisions) Ordinance, Trade Descriptions Ordinance and Competition Ordinance. It also enforces the Unsolicited Electronic Messages Ordinance.

The Office of the Communications Authority (OFCA), the CA's executive arm and secretariat, helps the CA administer and enforce these ordinances.

Telecommunications

The government aims to facilitate the development of the telecommunications industry and enhance Hong Kong's position as the region's telecommunications hub. The long-standing pro-competition policy and pro-market approach has encouraged an abundant supply of quality and state-of-the-art services for consumers and businesses at competitive prices.

Mobile Communications

Four mobile network operators provide second-generation (2G), third-generation (3G) and fourth-generation (4G) services. The city had 18.34 million mobile subscribers as at December, representing a population penetration rate of 248 per cent, one of the world's highest. Among them, 16.89 million were users of 3G or 4G services. Mobile data usage reached 30,467 terabytes, a 30 per cent rise over December 2016. On average, each resident used 4,112 megabytes per month in 2017. Mobile data services are available at downlink speeds of up to 800 Mbps. The World Economic Forum's *Global Information Technology Report 2016* ranked Hong Kong first among 139 economies in mobile phone penetration rate and mobile network coverage.

Fixed Communications

There is no preset limit on the number of licences that can be issued for fixed communications services, nor any deadline for the submission of applications. As at end-2017, there were 27 local fixed telephone network licensees, providing 92 fixed-line or internet phone services per 100 households, one of the highest penetration rates in the world. It is the government's policy to promote facility-based competition in the local fixed services market. As a result, 88 per cent and 79 per cent of households could choose between at least two and three self-built local fixed customer access networks respectively as at March.

Fixed Broadband

Hong Kong has one of the world's most advanced fixed broadband network infrastructures and a high household fixed broadband penetration rate of 92.8 per cent. According to internet content delivery provider Akamai's *State of the Internet 1st Quarter, 2017 Report*, Hong Kong has the world's fourth fastest broadband, with an average peak connection speed of 129.5 Mbps.

The city is ranked fifth globally in deploying an optical fibre access network, according to the Fibre to the Home Council Europe's report in February 2018.

Charges for fixed broadband services are very competitive. At a monthly rate of as low as about \$138, or US\$18, users may access broadband internet service at speeds of up to 1 Gbps. The city is also at the forefront in providing public Wi-Fi service, with more than 49,000 Wi-Fi hot spots by end-December.

External Telecommunications

Forty-three operators were licensed to provide cable-based and/or non-cable-based external telecommunications facilities as at end-2017. Hong Kong has eight submarine cable landing stations and is connected to 11 regional and transcontinental submarine cable systems. It is also connected to the Mainland via 20 overland cables. The total equipped capacity of the external telecommunications facilities in December exceeded 57,955 Gbps.

Satellite Communications

Two Hong Kong companies, APT Satellite Company Limited and Asia Satellite Telecommunications Company Limited, were licensed to operate and provide satellite communications services. As at end-2017, they were operating 11 satellites. Another new satellite is scheduled to be launched in 2018.

Unsolicited Electronic Messages

The Unsolicited Electronic Messages Ordinance regulates the sending of commercial electronic messages, including faxes, pre-recorded telephone messages, short messages and emails. The ordinance requires senders of commercial electronic messages to comply with specific sending rules. There are three 'do-not-call' registers (DNCs) for faxes, short messages and pre-recorded telephone messages respectively. Senders are prohibited from sending commercial electronic messages to DNC-registered numbers without the consent of the registered users. As at end-2017, more than 2.8 million numbers were registered in the three DNCs.

In 2017, the CA received about 800 reports of suspected contraventions and issued 42 warning letters to senders. A commercial fax sender was fined by the court for non-compliance with an enforcement notice issued by the CA.

Hong Kong works with other jurisdictions to combat spam and unsolicited emails. The OFCA is a member of the Unsolicited Communications Enforcement Network, which combats spam through international cooperation and the sharing of experience and intelligence.

Protection of Consumers

The OFCA works closely with the industry to safeguard consumer interests in using telecommunications services and to resolve any systemic problems that are manifested in consumer complaints, such as issues concerning chargeable mobile content services, mobile bill shock, contractual disputes, operators' fair usage policy, billing information and payment collection.

The industry offers a voluntary Customer Complaint Settlement Scheme, which receives funding and administrative support from the OFCA, to mediate billing disputes in deadlock between consumers and their service providers. In 2017, 67 eligible applications were handled, of which 97 per cent were settled.

Broadcasting

Commercial Broadcasting

Hong Kong is a forerunner in the adoption of advanced broadcasting technologies. The broadcasting policy objectives are to widen programme choice and diversity through competition, to facilitate the introduction of innovative broadcasting services, and to enhance the city's position as a regional broadcasting hub. To achieve these objectives, Hong Kong adopts a facilitating and pro-competition approach to promote the use of innovative technologies and provides a regulatory environment that moves with the times for new services to flourish.

At the end of 2017, Hong Kong had some 800 satellite and pay-TV channels available in digital format, and was the world leader in deploying internet protocol TV technology, with more than one million subscribers. Fifteen licensed satellite TV broadcasters provided more than 180 channels for the Asia-Pacific region. Three domestic free-TV licensees operated a total of 11 free-to-air channels, comprising three analogue channels and eight digital channels in high-definition format.

As to radio, two sound broadcasting licensees provided a total of six analogue radio channels as at year end.

Regulatory Approach

Television programme services and their carriage networks are regulated separately. A service provider may hire any transmission network operator to transmit its service instead of investing in transmission infrastructure itself. This arrangement facilitates market entry and encourages competition.

The Broadcasting Ordinance regulates the four categories of TV programme services – domestic-free, domestic-pay, non-domestic (mainly satellite TV services targeting the Asia-Pacific) and other licensable TV programme services (mainly TV services for hotel rooms) – according to their characteristics and pervasiveness rather than their transmission modes. Sound broadcasting services are regulated under the Telecommunications Ordinance and Broadcasting (Miscellaneous Provisions) Ordinance.

Hong Kong's facilitative and pro-competition regulatory approach has resulted in a multitude of TV and radio channels with diversified programming.

Public Service Broadcasting

Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) is a government department that serves as the city's public service broadcaster. It provides editorially independent, professional and quality radio, TV and new media services. The RTHK Charter enshrines RTHK's editorial independence and sets out its public purposes, mission and relationship with the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau, the CA and the RTHK Board of Advisors.

RTHK operates seven radio channels, with three of them using FM transmission and four using AM. The station produces more than 1,100 hours of diversified radio programmes in Cantonese,

English and Putonghua every week, including 16 hours of radio programmes under the Community Involvement Broadcasting Service.

RTHK produces TV programmes of public interest for broadcast on free and pay-TV channels. It also operates three digital terrestrial television (DTT) channels, two of which are carried on the analogue platform as well. In 2017, RTHK produced 1,403 hours of programmes for broadcasting on its TV channels as well as free and pay-TV platforms. By end-2017, 19 transmitting stations, comprising main and fill-in stations, were taking the DTT network coverage to about 90 per cent of the population. RTHK will continue to establish the remaining 10 fill-in stations to extend its network coverage to about 99 per cent of the population, matching that of commercial DTT broadcasters.

To complement the government's education policies, RTHK produces 19.9 hours of new educational TV programmes for pre-primary, primary and secondary schools and operates an interactive learning platform, eTVonline. It also provides filming and technical support as well as audio and video signals to local and overseas broadcasters to air events of public interest, such as the National Day celebration and flag-raising ceremony, Chief Executive's Policy Address and ceremonial opening of the legal year.

RTHK harnesses the multimedia potential of emerging media platforms, including providing applications for smart TV as well as mobile services RTHK Mine, RTHK News, RTHK On the Go and RTHK Screen, to meet the diverse needs of the public. Average daily page views of 3.2 million were recorded in 2017. RTHK also provided Nepalese and Urdu subtitles in some TV programmes to cater for ethnic minorities.

Recent Developments

The government encourages the use of DTT broadcasting technology to enhance spectrum efficiency and enable the provision of quality TV services. About 88 per cent of households receive digital television. Among the three commercial broadcasters, two make use of the broadcasting spectrum to provide digital coverage of at least 99 per cent of the population; one provides analogue and digital services through a fixed network that covers about 93 per cent of households. The government plans to complete in 2017-18 a review of the target date, set in end-2020, of switching off analogue TV services.

A review of the broadcasting-related ordinances is also under way, with the aim of relaxing some obsolete statutory requirements and rationalising the regulatory regime so as to provide a balanced competitive environment and allow more room for innovation and investment to support the sustainable development of free-TV services.

Postal Services

Hongkong Post provides a broad range of reliable postal and related services at affordable prices. In 2017, it handled 1.17 billion postal items, of which 82.3 per cent was local mail.

In response to the growth in e-commerce, Hongkong Post continues to introduce new delivery solutions. During the year, the number of iPostal stations citywide was increased to 16. This is a

self-service mail collection facility where online shoppers can pick up their purchases. Hongkong Post also extended its e-Express service to seven more countries, bringing the total to 26 major destinations covered by the service.

A new local delivery service, Postage Prepaid Envelope, was launched for the submission of application forms to the Transport Department.

Retail Network

In 2017, Hongkong Post operated a network of 124 post offices, of which 121 had become acceptance offices for EC-ship posting by November, up from 51 in 2016. The remaining three are mobile post offices.

Stamps and Philately

Fourteen issues of special and commemorative stamps were released. Hongkong Post applied augmented reality technology for the first time to two stamp issues, namely 'Revitalisation of Historic Buildings in Hong Kong II' issued on 25 April and 'Children Stamps – The Five Senses' issued on 18 July.

International Cooperation

Hongkong Post is an active member of the international postal community. It keeps abreast of industry developments and forges close cooperation with postal counterparts.

Film Classification

Hong Kong adopts a three-tier film classification system: Category I, which is suitable for all ages; Category II, subdivided into Category IIA, not suitable for children, and Category IIB, not suitable for young persons and children; and Category III, only for persons who have attained the age of 18. The aim is to allow adults wide access to films while protecting young persons and children from exposure to potentially harmful materials. Category IIA and IIB classifications are advisory, while the age restriction for Category III films is mandatory.

In 2017, 2,228 films were submitted for classification, compared with 2,196 in 2016. Of these, 680 were classified as Category I, 770 as Category IIA, 603 as Category IIB and 175 as Category III.

Film classification standards are kept in line with society's expectations through public opinion surveys and consultation with a statutory panel of advisers, comprising about 300 members drawn from different walks of life.

The Board of Review (Film Censorship) is empowered under the Film Censorship Ordinance to review decisions on film classifications upon request. The board comprises nine non-official members appointed by the Chief Executive, plus the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development as an ex-officio member.

Control of Obscene and Indecent Articles Ordinance

The policy objective in regulating obscene and indecent articles is to preserve public morals and protect young people from the harmful effects of obscene and indecent materials while preserving the free flow of information and safeguarding freedom of expression. The publication, including distribution, circulation and sale, and public display of obscene and indecent articles, including printed matter, sound recordings, videotapes, discs and electronic publications, are regulated by the Control of Obscene and Indecent Articles Ordinance.

Under the ordinance, 'obscenity' and 'indecenty' include violence, depravity and repulsiveness. An article may be classified as Class I (neither obscene nor indecent), Class II (indecent) or Class III (obscene). The relevant enforcement agencies are the Office for Film, Newspaper and Article Administration, the police and the Customs and Excise Department. These agencies and the Secretary for Justice may submit articles to the Obscene Articles Tribunal for classification. Publishers, authors, printers, manufacturers, importers, distributors and copyright owners may also submit articles voluntarily to the tribunal for classification rulings before publication if in doubt.

The government is drafting legislative amendments to the ordinance to improve the regulatory regime.

Websites

Access to Government Information: www.access.gov.hk

Commerce and Economic Development Bureau: www.cedb.gov.hk

Communications Authority: www.coms-auth.hk

Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau: www.cmab.gov.hk

Digital TV: www.digitaltv.gov.hk

Government's e-bulletin: www.news.gov.hk

Home Affairs Bureau: www.hab.gov.hk

Hongkong Post: www.hongkongpost.hk

Information Services Department: www.isd.gov.hk

Office of the Communications Authority: www.ofca.gov.hk

Office for Film, Newspaper and Article Administration: www.ofnaa.gov.hk

Radio Television Hong Kong: www.rthk.org.hk