

Media and Communications

Hong Kong's lively media and world-class telecommunications provide ready access to a wealth of information and entertainment, including the publication of 637 daily newspapers and periodicals locally. More than 93 per cent of households are broadband service subscribers and the mobile subscriber penetration rate is about 292 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 2018 included 80 daily newspapers (including electronic newspapers), 557 periodicals, three domestic free-television programme service licensees, two domestic pay-TV programme service licensees, 14 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 50 Chinese-language dailies, 12 English-language dailies, 14 bilingual dailies and four 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, 43 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 around 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 and advertising agency, publisher and news organisation, media adviser and research unit. The department has four divisions, namely 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 38 information and public relations units in bureaux 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 6,400 news and feature stories and some 1,550 video highlights were posted in 2018. News items and messages are also disseminated through smartphones, mobile devices and social media, including Facebook, Instagram, WeChat, Twitter and YouTube. More than 308 million page views were recorded in 2018.

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 2018 included the HKSAR Government's Celebration of the 40th Anniversary of the Reform and Opening Up of the Country, Promotion of Reading, Next Generation Smart Identity Card System project and the 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 in the Mainland. In 2018, the division was actively involved in the preparation and operation of the Hong Kong Exhibition Area in the China Pavilion of the first China International Import Expo in Shanghai in November.

The division handles around 2,700 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 via an online photo sales system which gives the public easy access to the department's substantial archive of historical and topical photos. Through its sales outlet and online bookstore, over 51,300 government books and miscellaneous printed items were sold in 2018.

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, in the Mainland and in

Taiwan. Its Overseas Public Relations Sub-division promotes and monitors Hong Kong's image overseas and liaises closely with over 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. To tie in with the outbound visits of senior officials, it coordinates and implements overseas publicity projects. The sub-division partners with internationally renowned media organisations to produce multimedia publicity materials to promote Hong Kong's strengths and advantages. To further enhance Hong Kong's exposure to global audiences, it supports thematic events hosted by the international media in the city.

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 digital and social media platforms.

The Visits and International Conferences Sub-division oversees the ISD's Sponsored Visitors Programme for government and political leaders, academics and think-tank members, as well as leading figures in the business and financial sectors 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 in the Mainland, as well as the Hong Kong Economic, Trade and Cultural Office in Taiwan, are important 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 and dragon boat racing.

Europe

In 2018, the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office (ETO) in Brussels organised the visit of the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, to Belgium and France to strengthen Hong Kong's close ties with these countries and with the European Union (EU). She met senior EU and national government officials, business people, academics, scientists and representatives of cultural institutions, and witnessed the signing of two agreements, on strengthening collaboration in wine and food tourism promotion, and on establishing a research centre for infection, immunology and personalised medicine at the Hong Kong Science Park.

The Financial Secretary, Mr Paul Chan Mo-po, visited Dublin to promote cooperation in financial services, financial technology and aircraft leasing. On a separate trip to the Irish capital was the

Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong, to share social welfare experiences. The Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Edward Yau Tang-wah, witnessed the signing of agreements in the Netherlands on a new 'garden tourism' project in Hong Kong, while the Secretary for the Civil Service, Mr Joshua Law Chi-kong, learned about human resources in the French civil service.

The Brussels office supported Mr Wong Chi-yung, the first Hong Kong artist to take part in the Impact Festival. His lighting art installation at Théâtre de Liège in Belgium proved so successful that the exhibition was extended by two months.

In 2018, the London ETO organised six visits by HKSAR Government principal officials to countries under its purview, including a trip to the UK by the Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung.

The office organises and supports various cultural and business events. These include gala dinners, receptions, business seminars, film festivals, music concerts, theatre and dance performances and art exhibitions, as well as a Dragon Boat Festival in London. It also takes part in the London Chinatown Chinese New Year celebration, the biggest outside Asia, and creates a float for the annual City of London Lord Mayor's Show. In 2018, for the seventh time it held a competition to encourage UK students to study in Hong Kong.

The Berlin ETO organised the Chief Executive's visit to the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Davos, Switzerland, and lined up a series of bilateral meetings and events to promote Hong Kong to political and business leaders from around the world.

Other priorities of the office centred on promoting opportunities under the Belt and Road Initiative and the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area development, with seminars in Poland and Hungary, and on publicising Hong Kong's innovation and technology (I&T) sector. The office also organised and supported film festivals and trade shows, and participated in major events such as the Asia Pacific Week Berlin, China Time Hamburg and Frankfurt Book Fair to feature some of Hong Kong's most prestigious business and arts sectors. It took part in education fairs to attract young talent to study and work in Hong Kong, and helped young people from Hong Kong connect to their counterparts across Central and Eastern Europe.

North America

In 2018, the ETO in Washington, DC, organised the visits of the Secretary for Justice, Ms Teresa Cheng Yeuk-wah, and the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development.

The Washington office presented the 23rd annual Made in Hong Kong Film Festival, co-organised by the Smithsonian Institution. The event featured appearances by director Alan Lo and actress Venus Wong.

The New York ETO continued to promote Hong Kong's strengths and opportunities through various activities and social media, particularly in the fields of law, finance and I&T. The office forged ties with business and government leaders, major think tanks and key media, arts and

cultural institutions. Visits were arranged for the Secretary for Justice, the Secretary for the Civil Service and the Secretary for Labour and Welfare to the eastern US.

The office reached out to new stakeholders through arts, culture and sports. It hosted a reception in Newport, Rhode Island, for the Scallywag sailing team, Hong Kong's first entry in the Volvo Ocean Race, and set up a booth in Newport's Race Village. Sponsorships were renewed for the Hell Gate Sevens Tournament in New York, Penn Mutual Collegiate Rugby Championship in Philadelphia and dragon boat festivals in Atlanta, Boston, Chicago and New York.

The creative industries were promoted through several Hong Kong film series in New York and Chicago. The New York Asian Film Festival honoured director Dante Lam with the Daniel A. Craft Award for Excellence in Action Cinema and actress Stephy Tang with the Screen International Rising Star Asia Award.

Ongoing arts fellowship partnerships with the Asian Cultural Council and Yale-China Association enabled outstanding Hong Kong artists to join residency programmes in New York and at Yale University respectively.

In an exciting year for the San Francisco ETO, the office presented the Nations Welcome Ceremony for the first Rugby World Cup Sevens held on American soil. Thousands of people gathered to welcome 40 men's and women's teams, including from Hong Kong, and were treated to a Cantonese opera performance. The opera troupe, as well as a rope skipping team that performed at the office's spring receptions, also participated in local community events as young talent representing Hong Kong.

Other notable developments included the Excellence in International Partnerships award given to the office by the Chinese American Museum in Los Angeles. The office presented a curator talk at an exhibition honouring late Hong Kong painter Wesley Tongson and sponsored dragon boat festivals in San Francisco and Portland, Oregon. Seven film festivals were supported across five US states, where five of the seven Hong Kong films showcased were produced by emerging filmmakers. Director Wong Kar-wai and actress Cheng Pei-pei were feted at the Hawaii International Film Festival and San Francisco's CAAMFest respectively.

The office welcomed the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Mr James Henry Lau, and the Secretary for the Environment, Mr Wong Kam-sing. It also promoted opportunities arising from I&T developments in Hong Kong and raised awareness of the Greater Bay Area and Belt and Road Initiative through talks and seminars.

The Toronto ETO staged a five-month nationwide roving exhibition entitled 'Hong Kong: Asia's World City' to showcase the achievements and beauty of Hong Kong. It also organised and participated in various business events across Canada to promote Hong Kong as an ideal gateway to Mainland China, other parts of Asia and the Belt and Road region.

Visits were arranged for the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development to Ottawa and Montreal to foster Hong Kong-Canada economic and trade ties, and for the Secretary for the Civil Service to Ottawa for bilateral exchanges on civil service management and training.

The office also supported the Hong Kong Cultural Expo, a residency cultural exchange project and musical performances to showcase Hong Kong arts talent. In Toronto and Montreal, academic seminars on Hong Kong's development and success were held and Hong Kong movies participated in international film festivals.

Northeast Asia

The Tokyo ETO represents Hong Kong to promote closer economic and trade ties as well as cultural exchanges with Japan and Korea.

In 2018, the Tokyo office organised the visit of the Chief Executive to Japan to enhance bilateral relations, accompanied by the Secretary for Justice, the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development and the Secretary for Innovation and Technology, Mr Nicholas W. Yang. They met key officials, members of the Diet and business leaders, and visited local universities, scientific research institutes and smart city facilities. To tie in with the visit, the office organised a Hong Kong Week, featuring a seminar on women empowerment, an architectural exhibition, a cheongsam exhibition, a large business symposium, a tourism exhibition and arts performances to highlight Hong Kong's soft powers.

Other events presented or supported by the office included a spring reception in Tokyo, a 'Special Focus on Hong Kong' at the Osaka Asian Film Festival, the Yokohama Dragon Boat Race, Asian Youth Orchestra concerts and the Hong Kong Cup Student Ambassadors English Programme for university students in Japan.

The office also arranged trips by the Secretary for Justice, the Secretary for the Environment and the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan Siu-chee, to Incheon, Tokyo and Seoul respectively.

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 2018, the office organised and supported five visits to these states by the Chief Executive, the Financial Secretary, the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, the Secretary for Food and Health and the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Lau Kong-wah.

To promote Hong Kong's soft strengths, the Singapore ETO sponsors some performances of visiting art groups, such as the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra and Spring-Time Experimental Theatre in 2018. It also organises receptions to establish connections and enhance networking with diplomats, local government officials, academics and think tanks, the business sector, arts and cultural organisations, as well as the local Hong Kong community.

The office coordinates 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 the Hang Seng University of Hong Kong, formerly known as Hang Seng Management College. In 2018, it helped about 120 students take up internships in six ASEAN countries.

The Jakarta ETO represents the HKSAR Government in matters with ASEAN as a whole and liaises with the ASEAN Secretariat. In 2018, the office organised the visit to Jakarta by the Chief Executive and the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, the Financial Secretary's visits to Manila and Bali, and the Secretary for Home Affairs' trip to Jakarta.

To promote cultural exchanges, the office staged photo exhibitions at the World Conference on Creative Economy and Jakarta Marketing Week. The office also supported the Jakarta dragon boat festival and, in collaboration with the Hong Kong Tourism Board, introduced Hong Kong's neighbourhoods to Indonesians. Outreach activities in Medan and Surabaya in Indonesia, Malaysia's Penang and the Philippines' Davao and Cebu promoted Hong Kong's unique business advantages.

The office supported tours by the City Contemporary Dance Company and Asian Youth Orchestra in Kuala Lumpur and Manila respectively. Student briefings and internships were offered in Indonesia to help the young appreciate career and business opportunities in ASEAN under the Belt and Road Initiative.

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, OzAsia Festival in Adelaide and Auckland Lantern Festival. It also holds career talks in universities to promote work opportunities in Hong Kong. Trips were organised to Auckland, Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney in 2018 to publicise Hong Kong's talent admission schemes.

On the business front, the office conducts and supports events to update businesses on Hong Kong's latest developments, especially on opportunities arising from the Belt and Road Initiative and Greater Bay Area development.

During the year, the Secretary for the Civil Service visited Melbourne to get an update on the management and training of the Australian civil service. To enhance cultural exchange, the office supported the Hong Kong City Contemporary Dance Company's tour to Brisbane and Darwin as well as a young Hong Kong watercolour artist's presentation at the Vivid Sydney annual festival.

Mainland and Taiwan

In the Mainland, the Beijing Office and the four ETOs in Chengdu, Guangdong, Shanghai and Wuhan organise seminars, cultural activities, youth exchanges and the visits of Hong Kong business delegations. The investment promotion divisions of these offices promote Hong Kong's business advantages and liaise closely with Mainland enterprises, helping them set up

businesses in the city. The internet, the radio and Hong Kong-themed TV episodes are deployed to publicise the city's strengths and developments. Hong Kong arts and cultural groups obtain support to present events in the capital and other cities.

The year 2018 marked the 40th anniversary of China's reform and opening up. Celebrations included the Hong Kong Thematic Film Festival organised by the Beijing Office, during which a seminar was conducted to discuss exchange and cooperation between the Hong Kong and Mainland film industries. Roving exhibitions held by the four ETOs recapitulated, under the anniversary theme 'Joint Development • Shared Prosperity', the roles played by Hong Kong during the 40 years of national development.

In other activities, the Beijing office held a roving exhibition, 'Culture•Arts•Hong Kong'. With the office's support, the Sing Fai Cantonese Opera Promotion Association and the West Kowloon Cultural District's Xiqu Centre staged Cantonese operas in Beijing, demonstrating how Hong Kong's younger generations were preserving and developing this traditional art form. Other events included 'The Oral Legacies: Intangible Cultural Heritage of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region' exhibition, held in Prince Kung's Palace Museum, the 'Hong Kong-Macao Visual Art Biennale' and 'Ink Global – Moving Ink' exhibitions, and Gaudeamus Dunhuang's concerts, held during the Silk Road (Dunhuang) International Cultural Expo. The Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra, Hong Kong Repertory Theatre, City Contemporary Dance Company, Asian Youth Orchestra, Hong Kong Dance Federation and Actors' Family all received the Beijing Office's support to perform in the capital. These activities were highly welcomed by Mainland audiences, deepening their knowledge of Hong Kong's multidimensional arts and culture and enhancing mutual understanding.

The Guangdong ETO staged large-scale exhibitions and supported Yat Po Singers' a cappella concerts in Nanning and the Chung Ying Theatre Company's dramas in Foshan, among others. The Wuhan ETO organised Spotlight Hong Kong cultural activities, including youth cultural exchange concerts, Perry Chiu Experimental Theatre's drama *night, Mother*, BeijingDance/LDTX's contemporary dance *Prism • Angles*, Théâtre de la Feuille's mime *Papa* and a Hong Kong film, *The Concerto of The Bully*, and arranged the Secretary for Home Affairs' trips to Wuhan and Jingzhou. The Chengdu ETO held Cantonese-Sichuanese opera performances, a children's art exhibition and Hong Kong film festivals. It helped organise the Chief Executive's visit to Sichuan Province to promote Hong Kong-Sichuan cooperation.

In Taiwan, the Hong Kong Economic, Trade and Cultural Office maintains contact 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, it organised the 'Hong Kong Now' roving exhibition, introducing Hong Kong's developments in biotechnology, artificial intelligence, smart city and financial technology, and held a Hong Kong-Taiwan Economic Cooperation Forum on biotechnology. The Hong Kong-Taiwan Cultural Cooperation Committee organises the annual Hong Kong Week in Taipei to showcase Hong Kong's culture and creativity.

Code on Access to Government Information

As an open and accountable government, all bureaus and departments make information available to the public according to the Code on Access to Information. The code stipulates that bureaus 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 regulator of 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, offering mobile data at downlink speeds of up to 1.1 Gbps. These networks were serving 21.86 million mobile subscribers as at December, representing a population penetration rate of 292 per cent, one of the world's highest. Among them, 21.13 million were users of 3G or 4G services. Mobile data usage reached 51,442 terabytes, a 40 per cent rise over December 2017. On average, each resident used 5,922 megabytes per month in the past 12 months. The World Economic Forum's *Global Competitive Report 2018* ranked Hong Kong first among 140 economies in terms of the number of mobile-cellular telephone subscriptions per 100 population.

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 December, there were 27 local fixed telephone network licensees, providing 88 fixed-line or internet phone services per 100 households. It is the government's policy to promote facility-based competition in the local fixed services market. As a result, 89 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 93.2 per cent. Out of 63 economies, the city has the fourth fastest average internet bandwidth speed, according to the *World Competitiveness Yearbook 2018*, published by the International Institute for Management Development in May. It is placed fifth globally in deploying an optical fibre access network, as rated by the Fibre to the Home Council Europe in February.

Charges for fixed broadband are very competitive, starting from as low as about \$98 per month for services at speeds of up to 1 Gbps. The city is also at the forefront in providing public Wi-Fi service, with more than 56,000 Wi-Fi hot spots.

External Telecommunications

Forty-two operators are licensed to provide cable-based and/or non-cable-based external telecommunications facilities. 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 73,842 Gbps.

Satellite Communications

Two Hong Kong companies, APT Satellite Company Limited and Asia Satellite Telecommunications Company Limited, are licensed to operate and provide satellite communications services. They operate 12 satellites in total.

Unsolicited Electronic Messages

Unsolicited Electronic Messages Ordinance regulates the sending of commercial electronic messages, including faxes, pre-recorded telephone messages, short messages and emails. Operating under the ordinance are three 'Do-not-call' registers (DNCs) for faxes, short messages and pre-recorded telephone messages. As at end-2018, more than 2.7 million numbers were registered in the three DNCs.

In 2018, the CA received 625 reports of suspected contraventions and issued 30 warning letters to senders.

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, covering 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 service providers and their customers. During the year, 58 eligible applications were handled, of which 95 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.

At the end of 2018, Hong Kong had over 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. Fourteen licensed satellite TV broadcasters provided more than 200 channels for the Asia-Pacific region. Three domestic free-TV licensees operated 12 free-to-air channels, comprising three analogue channels and nine digital channels in high-definition format.

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

Regulatory Approach

Television programme services and their carriage networks are regulated separately. A TV programme service provider may choose to 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. 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 1,129 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 also operates three digital terrestrial television (DTT) channels, two of which are carried on the analogue platform as well. In 2018, RTHK produced 1,566 hours of programmes for broadcasting on its TV channels as well as free and pay-TV platforms. By the year end, 25 transmitting stations, comprising main and fill-in stations, were taking the DTT network coverage to about 95 per cent of the population. RTHK will continue to establish the remaining four fill-in stations to extend its network coverage to about 99 per cent of the population by April 2019, matching that of commercial DTT broadcasters.

RTHK produces 17 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.

The station harnesses the multimedia potential of new media platforms, including providing applications for smart TV as well as mobile services RTHK Mine, RTHK News, RTHK On the Go and RTHK Screen. Average daily visits of 450,000 were recorded for the RTHK website in 2018. Some TV programmes offered Nepalese and Urdu subtitles to cater for ethnic minorities.

Digital Terrestrial 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 digital TV services through a fixed network that covers about 93 per cent of households. As at end-2017, about 88 per cent of households were receiving digital TV services. The government has reviewed the target date, set in end-2020, of switching off analogue TV services and will announce its decision in early 2019.

Review of Broadcasting Regulatory Framework

The Broadcasting Regulatory Framework is under review, with a public consultation completed in May. The government plans to introduce legislative amendments in 2019 to relax obsolete statutory requirements and rationalise the regulatory framework to facilitate industry development.

Postal Services

Hongkong Post provides a broad range of reliable postal and related services at affordable prices. In 2018, it handled 1.25 billion postal items, 74.9 per cent of which was local mail.

To keep pace with the growth of e-commerce, Hongkong Post introduces new delivery solutions from time to time. The e-Express service was further extended during the year, covering 33 major destinations round the world. The number of iPostal stations citywide was

increased to 17, enabling customers to collect their mail at selected locations unconstrained by the opening hours of post offices.

Three postage label vending machines providing a wider range of preset-value postage labels and a postage enquiry function were put on trial in December 2018. Hongkong Post aims to replace all existing stamp vending machines by 2020.

Retail Network

In 2018, Hongkong Post operated a network of 124 post offices. Seven of the post offices launched the EPS EasyCash for Senior Citizens service in April, allowing the elderly to withdraw small amounts of cash in their local community without making a purchase.

Stamps and Philately

Thirteen issues of special and commemorative stamps were released during the year. In the issue of the 'Characters in Jin Yong's Novels' special stamps on 6 December, Hongkong Post introduced its first specially designed stamp booklet, containing 30 stamps of fictional martial arts exponent Zhang Wuji in various tai chi poses.

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 classification standards are kept in line with society's expectations through public surveys and consultation with a statutory advisory panel of about 300 members drawn from different walks of life. The aim is to allow adults wide access to films while protecting young persons and children from exposure to harmful materials.

The Category IIA and IIB classifications are advisory, while the age restriction for Category III films is mandatory.

During the year, 2,499 films were submitted for classification, among which 871, 834, 620 and 174 films were classified as Category I, Category IIA, Category IIB and Category III respectively.

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 and public display of obscene and indecent articles, such as printed matter, sound recordings, and discs, are regulated by the Control of Obscene and Indecent Articles Ordinance.

The relevant enforcement agencies are the Office for Film, Newspaper and Article Administration, the police and the Customs and Excise Department.

Under the ordinance, an article may be classified as Class I (neither obscene nor indecent), Class II (indecent) or Class III (obscene). The ordinance prohibits the publication of Class III articles. Publishers, authors, printers, manufacturers, importers, distributors and copyright owners may submit articles voluntarily to the Obscene Articles Tribunal for classification 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 online news platform: 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