

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 611 daily newspapers and periodicals locally. More than 93 per cent of households are broadband service subscribers and the mobile subscriber penetration rate is about 286 per cent.

Hong Kong has one of the most successful telecommunications markets in the world. Fully liberalised and keenly competitive, the market provides a wide range of innovative and advanced telecommunications services to consumers and business users. The city also has a vibrant broadcasting industry, offering a multitude of television and radio channels with diversified programming.

Mass Media

Hong Kong's mass media at the end of 2019 included 82 daily newspapers (including electronic newspapers), 529 periodicals, three domestic free-TV programme service licensees, two domestic pay-TV programme service licensees, 12 non-domestic TV programme service licensees, two sound broadcasting licensees and one government-funded public service broadcaster.

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 53 Chinese-language dailies, 12 English-language dailies, 13 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, 46 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 a regional base for international media including *The New York Times*, *Financial Times*, *The Nikkei* and *The Wall Street Journal*. Global wire services with significant operations in Hong Kong include Agence France-Presse, Bloomberg and Thomson Reuters. International broadcasters with operations in Hong Kong include CNN International, BBC, CNBC, NHK, Al Jazeera, Channel News Asia 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 900 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. It 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 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 6,240 news and feature stories and some 1,760 video highlights were posted in 2019. News items and messages are also disseminated through smartphones, mobile devices and social media, including Facebook, Instagram, WeChat, Twitter and YouTube. More than 360 million page views were recorded in 2019.

The Media Research Sub-division keeps the government informed of public opinion expressed in the mass news media and social media platforms. It produces daily media analyses 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 2019 included the HKSAR Government's Celebration of the 70th Anniversary of the Founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC), HKSAR Government's Celebration of the 40th Anniversary of the Reform and Opening Up of the Country, Voluntary Health Insurance Scheme, Next Generation Smart Identity Card System project and the territory-wide identity card replacement exercise, 2019 District Council Election, voter registration, 'Treasure Hong Kong, our home', 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 2019, the division was actively involved in the preparation and operation of the Hong Kong Exhibition Area in the China Pavilion of the second China International Import Expo in Shanghai in November.

The division handles over 2,300 titles and produces a wide variety of government publications, including this yearbook and its internet version. 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 45,000 government books and miscellaneous printed items were sold in 2019.

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 communications programme, promoting Hong Kong as Asia's world city around the world. The unit develops advertising campaigns and publicity material in print and electronic formats to support the government's Economic and Trade Offices' events, senior officials' visits and major promotional activities outside Hong Kong. The unit also seeks opportunities and collaborates with organisers of major international conferences, tournaments and festivals in Hong Kong. It runs a number of social media platforms and digital campaigns to promote Hong Kong's strengths and advantages.

The Visits and International Conferences Sub-division runs 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 2019, the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office (ETO) in Brussels supported the Financial Secretary, Mr Paul Chan Mo-po, in attending the Annual Meeting of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and bilateral meetings with financial ministers from other countries. He also visited the Luxembourg House of Financial Technology and introduced Hong Kong's fintech developments.

The office organised the visit of the Secretary for Justice, Ms Teresa Cheng Yeuk-wah, SC, to France, Luxembourg and the Netherlands to promote Hong Kong's legal and dispute resolution services; and the visit of the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Mr James Henry Lau Jr, to Ireland to attend the European Financial Forum and promote aviation leasing, fintech and green finance. It supported the visit of the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan Siu-chee, to the Netherlands to learn about the country's primary health care.

The London ETO supported the visits of seven principal officials to countries under its purview, including the Financial Secretary's UK trip. He briefed senior government officials, members of Parliament and business representatives on developments in Hong Kong and attended the annual Hong Kong Dinner in London organised by the Hong Kong Trade Development Council.

The London office supports the annual London Hong Kong Dragon Boat Festival and the London Chinatown Chinese New Year celebration, the biggest outside Asia. It also creates a float for the annual City of London Lord Mayor's Show. During the year, the office promoted Hong Kong's architecture and creative talent in the London Festival of Architecture by sponsoring an exhibition organised by the Hong Kong Institute of Architects.

The Berlin ETO organised the trip of the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, and TeamHK to Davos, Switzerland, to attend the World Economic Forum (WEF) 50th Annual Meeting to remind global political, business and media leaders that Hong Kong's enduring advantages continued to serve it well.

Other core activities focused on reinforcing Hong Kong's institutional and fundamental strengths under 'one country, two systems', and promoting business opportunities arising from the Belt and Road Initiative and the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area development.

North America

In 2019, the ETO in Washington, DC, organised the visits of the Financial Secretary and the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Edward Yau Tang-wah.

The Washington office presented the 24th annual Made in Hong Kong Film Festival, co-organised by the Smithsonian Institution. The event featured appearances by actresses Crisel Consunji and Jennifer Yu, director Sunny Chan and actor Kenny Wong Tak-bun. The office also hosted a reception to welcome a Hong Kong squash team which competed in the World Squash Federation Men's World Team Squash Championship.

The New York ETO helped arrange the trips of the Financial Secretary and the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development.

Hong Kong's rich and diverse arts and culture were highlighted through the US premiere of the chamber opera, *Mila*, in New York. The New York Asian Film Festival honoured action choreographer and director Yuen Woo-ping with the Star Asia Lifetime Achievement Award.

Chicago's Asian Pop-Up Cinema presented the Lifetime Achievement Award to Kenneth Tsang and the Career Achievement Award to Nina Paw.

The New York office supported the first US museum exhibition of multidisciplinary artist Samson Young at the University of Chicago. A reception was hosted for Hong Kong Arts Festival executive director Tisa Ho, who had been elected as board chairman of the International Society for the Performing Arts to lead the New York arts and cultural community in promoting Hong Kong's arts and culture.

Hong Kong's creative talent was on full display in San Francisco as well. 'Co-creating Hong Kong: a design+ exhibition' debuted in the city, showcasing new perspectives on technology, sustainability and community by leading and emerging design talent. The San Francisco ETO also staged 'On View: Hong Kong', an installation exhibition commissioned and produced by the West Kowloon Cultural District.

The office supported two special opera events in San Francisco, namely collaborative performances delivered by 24 renowned Cantonese opera artists and musicians from Hong Kong together with a San Francisco opera troupe, and the chamber opera *Mila*, which was produced by an international team from the US, Hong Kong and the Philippines. A cosy recital was hosted at the office's lobby presenting works of composer Alfred Wong, whose *Night Poem III* had its world premiere at an international cello festival in California. Film director John Woo appeared at the international film festival in Hawaii.

The office welcomed the Financial Secretary, who visited San Francisco and Seattle to bolster Hong Kong-US links on innovation and technology (I&T), the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development and the Secretary for Innovation and Technology, Mr Nicholas W. Yang.

The Toronto ETO staged the inaugural Hong Kong Week, themed 'Connect and Excel', to promote Hong Kong's strengths and potential through photo exhibitions, a national business conference, academic seminars, a music concert, dragon boat festival activities and a drama performance.

A visit to Vancouver was arranged for the Secretary for Innovation and Technology to promote I&T developments in Hong Kong.

The office hosted and supported business events across Canada to promote Hong Kong's unique business advantages, including its roles in the Greater Bay Area, the Belt and Road Initiative and the Asian market. The office also organised cultural activities featuring Hong Kong athletes and musicians.

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 2019, the Tokyo office organised the visits of the Chief Executive to Tokyo to officiate and speak at the Symposium on Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and to attend the

Enthronement Ceremony of the Japanese Emperor. The office also arranged visits by the Financial Secretary, the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong, and the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Lau Kong-wah, to Japan, and the Secretary for Justice and the Secretary for Home Affairs to Korea.

Other events presented or supported by the office included a spring reception in Tokyo, a gala dinner in Seoul, a 'Special Focus on Hong Kong' at the Osaka Asian Film Festival and the Yokohama Dragon Boat Race.

Southeast Asia

The Singapore ETO fosters bilateral relations between Hong Kong and three Association of the Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries, namely Laos, Singapore and Vietnam, as well as India. In 2019, the office organised and supported visits by the Secretary for the Environment, Mr Wong Kam-sing, and the Secretary for Food and Health.

To promote Hong Kong's soft strengths, the Singapore office sponsored performances of the Hong Kong String Orchestra, Zuni Icosahedron, Spring-Time Experimental Theatre and two groups of young Hong Kong musicians.

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 Hang Seng University of Hong Kong. In 2019, it helped more than 80 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. It focuses specifically on promoting bilateral relations with Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines. In 2019, the office organised the Secretary for Labour and Welfare's Jakarta trip and the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development's Kuala Lumpur trip.

The office promoted the Hong Kong film industry at Manila's Cinemalaya Philippine Independent Film Festival, which featured the award-winning film, *Still Human*.

Student briefings and internship placements were offered in Indonesia to help the younger generation appreciate career and business opportunities in ASEAN under the Belt and Road Initiative.

The Bangkok ETO officially went into operation on 28 February. As the third ETO established by the HKSAR Government in ASEAN, it covers Thailand, Cambodia and Myanmar, as well as Bangladesh in South Asia. The Chief Executive officiated at the opening ceremony together with the Deputy Prime Minister of Thailand, Dr Somkid Jatusripitak.

Since its inception, the Bangkok office has been establishing ties actively with the nations under its purview. Apart from calling on government officials and ambassadors, it organised trips to Chiang Mai, Songkhla, Phuket, Khon Kaen and Chiang Rai in Thailand; Phnom Penh in

Cambodia; Nay Pyi Taw and Yangon in Myanmar; and Dhaka in Bangladesh to establish contacts and promote Hong Kong as a vibrant and international financial, trade, educational, art and cultural hub. Support was rendered to the tour of the Hong Kong Children's Symphony Orchestra in Bangkok.

The office organised the visits of the Chief Executive and the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development to Bangkok for the first meeting of the Hong Kong-Thailand High-Level Joint Committee, a new platform set up to deepen cooperation between the two economies. It also helped in the Secretary for Justice's trip to Thailand and the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development's participation in the third ASEAN Economic Ministers – Hong Kong, China Consultations meeting in Bangkok.

Australia and New Zealand

The Sydney ETO promotes Hong Kong in Australia and New Zealand. The Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development visited Sydney to sign the Hong Kong-Australia Free Trade Agreement and Investment Agreement on 26 March, after which the office organised business seminars in major Australian cities to promote the benefits and new opportunities to business and media contacts.

To enhance cultural and sports exchange, the office supported Azure Seas Cantonese Traditional Theatre's tour in Australia and New Zealand, and helped with the Hong Kong Youth Symphony Orchestra's participation in a Sydney international music festival and the Hong Kong Sports Association for Persons with Intellectual Disability's participation in Brisbane's INAS Global Games.

The Secretary for Food and Health visited Melbourne and Sydney to promote a limited registration scheme for non-Hong Kong trained doctors and to encourage qualified non-Hong Kong trained healthcare professionals, particularly doctors, nurses, physiotherapists and occupational therapists, to serve in Hong Kong's public healthcare system.

Mainland and Taiwan

In the Mainland, the Beijing Office and the four ETOs in Chengdu, Guangdong, Shanghai and Wuhan organise trade 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. Various platforms, such as the internet, social media, a newsletter and the radio, are used 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 2019 marked the 70th anniversary of the founding of the PRC. The Beijing Office provided support to the Hong Kong delegation, led by the Chief Executive, to participate in the celebration in Beijing, where Hong Kong presented a float at the National Day Parade on 1 October. Throughout the preparations, the Beijing Office helped HKSAR Government departments liaise with Mainland authorities to facilitate the work.

In other activities, the Beijing Office organised roving exhibitions entitled 'Innovation and Creativity in Hong Kong'. It also supported the joint performances of the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, China National Centre for the Performing Arts Orchestra and Shanghai Quartet in Beijing; the Asian Youth Orchestra's tour in Tianjin and Beijing; the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra's tour in Baoding, Hebei Province, and Harbin, Heilongjiang Province; the Xiqu Centre's new Cantonese opera productions in Beijing and Tianjin; as well as the City Contemporary Dance Company's performances at the Beijing Dance Festival and series of Hong Kong dance exchanges, workshops and seminars. In collaboration with the Hong Kong Film Archive, the Beijing Office presented film shows and talks at Peking University, Beijing Normal University and Hebei University. These activities were well received by Mainland audiences and enhanced their understanding of Hong Kong's arts and culture while strengthening cultural exchange and cooperation between the two places.

The Shanghai ETO helped organise the Chief Executive's visit. It also promoted the first Festival Hong Kong 2019 – A Cultural Extravaganza@Shanghai, supported the Asian Youth Orchestra to perform in the eastern region and worked with *National Geographic* to organise a photo exhibition on Hong Kong in Hangzhou. The Guangdong ETO held the exhibition, 'HKSAR Government's Celebration of the 40th Anniversary of the Reform and Opening Up of the Country: "Joint Development • Shared Prosperity"', in Guangzhou and Xiamen to showcase Hong Kong's crucial role in the country's reform and opening up, and supported the Windpipe Chinese Music Ensemble's concert in Nanning to celebrate the Hong Kong-Guangxi friendship. The Wuhan ETO organised two drama performances of *The Tragedy of Macbeth* and held the 'Hong Kong Photo Exhibition', featuring scenery, festive events and infrastructure, to showcase Hong Kong as a city of charm. The Chengdu ETO organised a crossover concert of the harmonica and erhu played by young Hong Kong talent and *A Taste of Authentic Hong Kong*, both in Chengdu. It supported the Sichuan-Hong Kong tribal dance drama *Red Poppies* in Chengdu, which is a deliverable under the Sichuan-Hong Kong Cooperation Conference mechanism. It helped organise the Secretary for the Environment's visit to Sichuan Province to join the closing ceremony and activities of the Youth Internship Programme at the Wolong National Nature Reserve to promote youth exchange.

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' exhibition, published the *Art & Culture@Hong Kong* booklet to introduce popular district attractions, and held a Hong Kong-Taiwan Economic Cooperation Forum on artificial intelligence. 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 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 telecommunications hub of the region. The telecommunications services market in Hong Kong is fully open to competition. The long-standing 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 and 24 mobile virtual network operators provide mobile telecommunications services, offering mobile data at downlink speeds of up to 1.1 Gbps. These networks were serving 23.98 million mobile subscriptions as at December, representing a population penetration rate of 286 per cent, one of the world's highest. Mobile data usage reached 69,899 terabytes, a 36 per cent rise over December 2018. On average, each resident used 8,245 megabytes per month in the past 12 months. The WEF's *Global Competitive Report 2019* ranked Hong Kong first among 141 economies in terms of the number of mobile-cellular telephone subscriptions per 100 population. To prepare for the advent of the fifth-generation (5G) era, 1,200 MHz of high-band 5G spectrum was assigned administratively in April, while a total of 380 MHz of mid-band 5G spectrum was assigned through auctions in October and November.

Fixed Communications

As at December, there were 27 local fixed carrier licensees providing 86 fixed telephony services per 100 households. Ninety per cent and 79 per cent of households can choose between at least two and three self-built local fixed customer access networks respectively.

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 93.6 per cent. The WEF's *Global Competitive Report 2019* ranked Hong Kong third among 141 economies in terms of the number of fibre internet subscriptions per 100 population.

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 of providing public Wi-Fi, with more than 62,000 Wi-Fi hot spots.

External Telecommunications

Forty-two operators are licensed to provide facility-based external telecommunications services. Hong Kong is connected with the Mainland through 20 overland cables and with the rest of world through 11 regional and transcontinental submarine cable systems set up at eight submarine cable landing stations. The total equipped capacity of the external telecommunications facilities in December exceeded 107,795 Gbps.

Satellite Communications

Two Hong Kong companies are licensed to operate and provide satellite communications services, operating 11 satellites in total.

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. Operating under the ordinance are three 'Do-not-call' registers (DNCs) for faxes, short messages and pre-recorded telephone messages. As at end-2019, more than 2.6 million numbers were registered in the three DNCs.

In 2019, the CA received 622 reports of suspected contraventions and issued 31 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 mobile bill shock, contractual disputes, operators' fair usage policy, billing information and payment collection.

The industry implements 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, 75 eligible applications were handled, of which 99 per cent were settled.

Broadcasting

Commercial Broadcasting

Hong Kong's 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. It adopts a facilitating and pro-competition approach to promote the use of innovative technologies and provides a liberalised and light-handed regulatory environment that moves with the times.

TV programmes and their carriage networks are regulated separately. A TV programme service provider may choose to engage 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.

At the end of 2019, Hong Kong had over 800 satellite and pay-TV channels available in digital format. As a forerunner in deploying internet protocol TV technology, the city had more than one million subscribers. Twelve licensed satellite TV broadcasters provided more than 220 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 radio channels as at the year end.

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 three FM and four AM radio channels. In 2019, the station produced 1,130 hours of diversified radio programmes in Cantonese, English, Putonghua and other languages every week, including 16 hours of radio programmes under the Community Involvement Broadcasting Service.

RTHK operates three digital terrestrial television (DTT) channels, two of which are carried on the analogue platform as well. Starting from 2019, all RTHK TV channels provide 24 hours' broadcast. By April, 29 transmitting stations were taking the DTT network coverage to about 99 per cent of the population.

The station harnesses the multimedia potential of new media platforms, providing a number of mobile applications. Average daily visits of over 614,000 were recorded for the RTHK website in 2019. Some programmes offered Bahasa Indonesia and Nepalese subtitles, audio descriptions and sign language interpretation to cater for the corresponding ethnic minorities and deaf or blind users.

Digital Television

In February 2019, the government announced that Hong Kong would implement full digital TV broadcast from 1 December 2020. Two commercial free-TV broadcasters and RTHK provide

digital coverage of at least 99 per cent of the population, while one commercial free-TV broadcaster provides digital TV services through a fixed network that covers about 93 per cent of households. As at end-2019, about 92 per cent of households were receiving digital TV services.

Review of Broadcasting Regulatory Framework

In March, the government introduced the Broadcasting and Telecommunications Legislation (Amendment) Bill 2019 into the Legislative Council to implement a number of broadcasting relaxation measures to facilitate sustainable development of the sector amid keen competition brought about by internet infotainment.

Postal Services

Hongkong Post provides reliable postal and related services at affordable prices. In 2019, it handled 1.17 billion postal items, 74.6 per cent of which was local mail.

To keep pace with the growth of e-commerce, the e-Express service was further extended during the year, covering 43 major destinations, while the self-service iPostal stations were increased to 21, enabling customers to collect their mail at selected locations unconstrained by the opening hours of post offices.

Postage label vending machines sell postage labels with a wide range of preset values and provide a postage enquiry function. Work to replace the vending machines is under way and the new machines will be fully commissioned at all post offices by mid-2020.

Retail Network

In July, the EPS EasyCash for Senior Citizens service was extended to all 124 post offices, 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. Characters were imprinted for the first time on the back of the Old Master Q stamp set as a special feature.

International Cooperation

In September, Hongkong Post attended the Universal Postal Union's Third Extraordinary Congress in Geneva, Switzerland, as part of the PRC delegation and participated in a discussion on reforms to the terminal dues system.

Film Classification

To allow adults wide access to films while protecting the interest of young people and children, Hong Kong adopts a three-tier film classification system with four categories: Category I, which is suitable for all ages; Category IIA, not suitable for children; Category IIB, not suitable for young persons and children; and Category III, for persons aged 18 or above only. Categories IIA and IIB

are advisory, while the age restriction for Category III films is mandatory. 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.

During the year, 2,604 films were submitted for classification, among which 993, 834, 624 and 153 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 under 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.

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: 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