

Association for the Betterment of Hong Kong's Entertainment Industry in Mainland China

While Chinese Premier LI Keqiang had reiterated Beijing's plan to support Hong Kong in "integrating their own development into overall national development" when he delivered his annual work report at the National People's Congress on 5 March, Hong Kong filmmakers, media moguls and local officials gathered at Hong Kong International Film & TV Market (FILMART) on 21 March for a press launch of the "Association for the Betterment of Hong Kong's Entertainment Industry in Mainland China". They hope, by gathering industry forces, and through negotiations with related Chinese government departments including the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film, and Television (SAPPRFT), China's entertainment sector and education sector to help Hong Kong filmmakers obtain more work opportunities and resolve associated legal and business disputes in China.

The new lobby group is led by Jackie CHAN as President, with Liza WANG and Alan TAM as Vice Presidents and Eric TSANG as Executive President. Other founding members include Warren MOK, Kennedy WONG, Louis KOO, Andrew LAU, Johnny NG, ZHANG Jian, WONG Cho Lam and Nicholas TSE. The press launch was attended by government officials from Hong Kong and Mainland, representatives from various institutes of performing arts as well as delegates from film and television production companies and distributors. It was a star-studded event as many celebrities and members of the Hong Kong entertainment industry were present to show support.

The development of the film, television and performing arts sectors in the Mainland was fast and rapid in the past 10 years. Over 16,000 TV programmes and almost 800 films were produced in 2015 and 2016 respectively, meaning some tens of films and TV programmes were produced each day. Supposedly such amazing production rate would allow more appearance for Hong Kong artists as well as more working opportunities for production crews from Hong Kong. Yet there is still the quota system limiting the number of Hong Kong and Macau artists working in China, causing them to miss out on a lot of job opportunities. On the other hand, despite Hong Kong film productions are already enjoying preferential access to the Chinese market under the "Closer Economic Partnership Agreement" (CEPA), there are still certain requirements for these productions to fulfill in order to enjoy the privileges. Also, China's recent

release of its 31 policy initiatives which removes the quota on the imports of Taiwan's entertainment products into China could be a possible cause for the group to show up now and urge to have restrictions on Hong Kong productions, artists and crew entering the Chinese market eased further and sooner.

Eric TSANG, the association's Executive President, recalled an unpleasant event which involved CHEUNG Ka Fai, HKFA "Best Film Editing" award-winning film editor. Not only did CHEUNG not getting his remuneration for a job he did for a Beijing company in 2016, he was even assaulted by the company's executives when he sought payment. TSANG believed the incident reflected the lack of a proper arbitrator between the entertainment industries in Hong Kong and China. The idea of forming a lobby group came up after the incident and TSANG started to make visits to related departments and units including the SAPPRFT to discuss details and associated issues.

The association's Vice President, Liza WANG, cited what Chinese President Xi Jinping had said in his speech at the 19th Communist Party congress about the close connection among Mainland China, Hong Kong and Macau in terms of developments; China will push for more collaboration between China and Hong Kong and Macau which would benefit all parties, and formulate more comprehensive policies to facilitate Hong Kong and Macau residents to work in the Mainland.

The association is determined to "unite, assist, follow-up", and act as the bridge linking up the entertainment industry among Hong Kong and Macau to Mainland China to foster the collaboration and communication among the 3 places in hope of bringing more opportunities for Hong Kong industry practitioners to participate in productions happening in China, to learn and to experience. The association is planning to set up liaison offices in major locations such as Hong Kong, Beijing and Huangdian to provide assistance to Hong Kong artists and production crews in different cities. They will also take advantage of the prospects which the "Development Plan for a City Cluster in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Bay Area" might bring about and explore the market in the area.