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# 24-hr BBC likely in <sup>24.12</sup> early 1989

By Victor Agustin

THE British Broadcasting Corporation's (BBC) proposed 24-hour radio service is likely to be launched early next year.

"In principle we think it's a reasonable idea," a Government official familiar with the negotiations said yesterday.

"No final decision has been taken at the moment," the official said.

But talks with London officials were continuing, he added.

"There are no major sticking points. We are just really discussing what sort of things we want to see on the service," the official said.

The Government would announce its decision this year, the official said.

The Beeb, as BBC is affectionately known, already broadcasts about 10 1/2 hours here on Radio 3 and Radio 5 of the government-owned Radio Television Hongkong (RTHK).

The Administrative Services and Information Secretary, Mr Peter Tsao, had said earlier that a separate frequency for the BBC may be granted — the sixth channel of RTHK.

With the reallocation of the radio frequencies, two spare AM frequencies have become available for radio broadcast. One has already been allocated by the Government to the emergency radio, a station devoted

mainly to news and public service announcements. The other is likely to go to the BBC.

The military station BFBS (British Forces Broadcasting Service) will be given a lower frequency starting in October 1989.

BFBS's new general manager, Mr Brian Hamilton, said the station would still broadcast round-the-clock to military stations.

He said the British military authorities and the Hongkong Government had already discussed details of BFBS's scaled-down operations.

A possible stronger BBC presence in Hongkong comes as China opens its doors to the international media.

In September 1987, the BBC launched a more powerful transmitter in Hongkong specifically beamed to the mainland after receiving assurances that it would be "business as usual" even after the territory is handed back to Beijing in 1997.

The relay station in Tsang Tsui, in Tuen Mun beams Mandarin and English programmes from Britain through two 250-kilowatt transmitters.

The Tsang Tsui station has also improved reception in Japan and Korea, which in the past had been served by a BBC relay station in Singapore.