

LC: 2nd reading of Merchant Shipping (Security of Ships and Port Facilities) Bill 2004

Following is the speech by the Secretary for Economic Development and Labour, Mr Stephen Ip, in resuming the second reading debate of the Merchant Shipping (Security of Ships and Port Facilities) Bill 2004 at Legislative Council meeting today (March 24)(translation):

Madam President,

I move that the Merchant Shipping (Security of Ships and Port Facilities) Bill 2004 be read a second time.

The Bill seeks to give effect to the new maritime security provisions of the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, 1974 and the associated International Ship and Port Facility Security Code adopted by the International Maritime Organization. These maritime security provisions will be binding on Hong Kong upon commencement on July 1, 2004 as the Central People's Government is a contracting government to the Convention which is applicable to Hong Kong by extension.

To fulfil the obligations under the international convention, we are required to give effect to the requirements through domestic legislation. Since the existing merchant shipping and port control legislations do not deal with security issues nor cover any port facilities that are located on land, we propose to enact a new legislation to provide for clarity and consistent implementation of the security provisions. The enactment of the Bill and its subsidiary regulation will empower the Director of Marine to implement the security requirements on Hong Kong registered ships and port facilities in Hong Kong, and impose security control measures on foreign ships visiting the port of Hong Kong.

Madam President, the Bill is supported by the local shipping and port industries and is essential in maintaining Hong Kong's status as an international maritime centre and a regional hub port. I would like to seek members' support in early passage of the Bill into law.

Ends/ Wednesday, March 24, 2004