

LC: Second reading of Merchant Shipping (Limitation of Shipowners Liability) (Amendment) Bill 2005

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Following is the speech (translation) by the Secretary for Economic Development and Labour, Mr Stephen Ip, in moving the second reading of the Merchant Shipping (Limitation of Shipowners Liability) (Amendment) Bill 2005 at Legislative Council meeting today (January 26):

Madam President,

I move that the Merchant Shipping (Limitation of Shipowners Liability)(Amendment) Bill 2005 be read a second time.

The Bill serves two purposes. The first is to implement the amendments to the International Convention on Limitation of Liability for Maritime Claims, adopted by the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), which increase shipowners' liability in respect of property claims or loss of life. The second purpose is to extend the liability regime applicable to international carriages, prescribed in the Athens Convention Relating to the Carriage of Passengers and their Luggage by Sea, to regional carriages between Hong Kong and Macao as well as Hong Kong and Mainland ports.

Whilst implementing the amendments to the International Convention on Limitation of Liability for Maritime Claims is voluntary, we propose to follow the IMO's amendments, so that the liability limits we apply in Hong Kong will be in line with international standards.

Extending the liability regime applicable to international carriages to regional carriages will enable regional carriers to limit their liabilities for certain maritime claims to a reasonable level. At the same time, passengers will be able to settle their claims in accordance with an internationally accepted liability regime.

Madam President, the Bill is supported by the local shipping industry and is essential for upholding Hong Kong's status as an international maritime centre. I recommend the Bill to this Council for early passage into law.

Ends/Wednesday, January 26, 2005

