

LC:Resumption of Second Reading of Merchant Shipping (Local Vessels and Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2005

Following is the translation of the speech by the Secretary for Economic Development and Labour, Mr Stephen Ip, in resuming the second reading debate of the Merchant Shipping (Local Vessels and Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2005 at the Legislative Council meeting today (November 30):

Madam President,

The Merchant Shipping (Local Vessels and Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2005 (the Bill) was introduced into the Legislative Council for First and Second Reading in May 2005. The Bill proposes amendments to the Merchant Shipping (Local Vessels) Ordinance (the LVO) and other related legislation in order to bring the LVO into operation.

The Bill covers three broad categories of amendments. First, the Bill proposes to introduce legal provisions to implement the agreed policy of introducing compulsory third party risk insurance requirements for all local vessels. At present, such requirements are imposed on launches, ferry vessels and pleasure vessels. Extending such requirements to all local vessels will enhance protection for third parties. The Bill will also clarify some provisions in the LVO, such as the power of the Director of Marine to prohibit vessels from anchoring or lying, which is necessary for effective discharge of duties under the LVO.

Secondly, the Bill will make miscellaneous amendments to various pieces of marine legislation. The LVO is a dedicated piece of law for local vessels. Ocean-going vessels will be governed by other local legislation. The proposed miscellaneous amendments will enable the Director of Marine to discharge his duties and ensure consistency in port operation requirements which are equally applicable to both local and ocean-going vessels.

Thirdly, the Bill proposes consequential amendments to 12 pieces of ordinances and 23 pieces of subsidiary legislation affected by the LVO and its subsidiary legislation.

Madam President, I would like to take this opportunity today to thank the Chairman of the Bills Committee, the Honourable Miriam LAU, and members of the

Bills Committee, in particular, the Hon WONG Yung-kan, CHAN Kam-lam, SIN Chung-kai for their efforts and valuable advice in scrutinising the Bill. My thanks again go to the chairman and other legislators. We also appreciate the dedicated work of the Hon WONG Yung-kan and will certainly consider his views. As mentioned by him, we will enhance communication with Mainland authorities and will facilitate, as far as we can, vessel operations under safe conditions. The Bills Committee supports the Bill and proposes certain improvements to it. The Administration has accepted these suggested improvements and will move Committee Stage Amendments accordingly.

The Bill has received support from the Economic Services Panel of the Legislative Council and the local shipping industry, and has been carefully scrutinized by the Bills Committee. The commencement of the LVO will improve the regulatory regime for local vessels and strengthen Hong Kong's status as a major international maritime centre. I urge Members to pass the Bill into law.

Thank you, Madam President.

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