



Drink-drive move 'too harsh'

CHOW CHUNG-YAN

Tougher drink-driving laws that take effect on May 1 have been criticised as too extreme.

The laws will be among the toughest in the world - just one pint of beer will put some drinkers over the limit.

The Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill will be introduced to the Legislative Council on December 2 for approval to cut the limit from 80mg of alcohol per 100ml of blood to 50mg.

"For most people, 50mg equates to two cans of mild beer or 1 1/2 small glasses of wine in the first hour," a government spokesman said yesterday after the Chief Ex-

ecutive-in-Council ordered the changes.

Last year, 30 per cent of drivers killed in accidents had consumed alcohol, the spokesman said.

The new laws, more stringent than in most European countries, were supported by police and taxi associations, but questioned by the Hong Kong Automobile Association.

"I think the existing limit is about right. Unless the Government has data to show that drink-driving is worsening, we don't see any reason to tighten the law," association secretary Jackson Ho Yee-pak said.

"We will raise our concerns during the Road Safety Council

meeting and we will contact the Transport Department."

Michael Jackson, a law lecturer at the University of Hong Kong, said the changes might not be appropriate.

"That's not to say alcohol controls are not important, but you have to think of the nature of our transportation system. It is difficult to drive very fast in Hong Kong, therefore it is less likely a driver would be affected."

Most taxi drivers interviewed by the *South China Morning Post* favoured the proposal. "It's great. A driver should be responsible for others' safety. I think the new laws can reduce road accidents," driver Chan Hing-sun said.