

Bills Committee on Revenue Bill 1999

Concerns raised by members at the meeting on 26 April 1999

Members requested the Administration the following -

- (a) To provide the respective numbers of prosecution cases in respect of stationary and moving offences since 1994 with a breakdown by type of vehicles and by year. For easy reference, members request the information be presented in the format of graphs. The Bills Committee has pointed out that the numbers of stationary and moving offences committed over the past few years have been declining. This shows that the existing fixed penalties for traffic-related offences have had sufficient deterrent effect. Moreover, members are concerned that career drivers and car retailers are already hard hit by the present economic downturn. The proposals to increase fixed penalties and traffic-related charges will add a further blow to them.
- (b) To explain the prosecution policy on traffic-related offences the commission of which will attract fixed penalties. Such information will be helpful when members explore the reasons for the declining number of traffic-related offences committed over the past years.
- (c) To confirm whether the proposal to relax the speed limits for certain roads was a decision made by the Executive Council. A member has doubt about the Administration's saying that the decision to relax the speed limits for certain roads is the result of an on-going review done by the Administration on traffic management. The member is of the view that if the relaxation proposal is part and parcel of a package of improvement measures to be implemented by the Administration, all the measures should be put into place before the contemplation of any proposal to increase fixed penalties.
- (d) To provide the time-table for the review on the approach in introducing revenue proposals in future. Members are concerned that the new approach in combining all revenue proposals for 1999-2000 in one bill has caused considerable debate. They consider it important that the Administration should make an early decision on the matter before the preparation of the next year's Budget.
- (e) To clarify members' queries as to whether it will amount to a breach of the Basic Law to increase criminal penalties by means of an executive order. Members are concerned that even if it is permissible under the Basic Law to make such an order, whether it is consistent with the spirit of the Basic Law.