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**Submission of the Occupational Safety and Health Committee,
Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions (FTU) on the
Factories and Industrial Undertakings (Amendment) Bill 1999 and
Factories and Industrial Undertakings (Safety Management) Regulation**

April 1999

The Government gazetted the Factories and Industrial Undertakings (Amendment) Bill 1999 in January, proposing to require workers of the construction and container handling industries to undergo basic safety training and to be issued certificates before being employed in such industries. In the case of a breach, both employers and employees will be held liable. The FTU supports the Bill.

Despite some improvements in local workers' awareness of occupational safety, industrial accident rates are, undoubtedly, still on the high side. It is believed that the introduction of mandatory safety training and safety management system which targeted at the construction and container handling industries will effectively enhance workers' safety awareness at work and provide better protection for workers, thus reducing the number of casualties involved in industrial accidents. However, if the coverage of safety training requirement and safety management system is extended to other industries in accordance with their characteristics, it will certainly help to promote more comprehensively and effectively employees' safety awareness at work. Furthermore, though both employers and employees are responsible for the provision of safety training and attending such courses, we believe that employers should undertake to pay for the safety training and workers are allowed to receive pay during training, so as to push ahead with the implementation and development of the entire exercise.

On the other hand, the provision of well-organized and proper courses is crucial in ensuring that workers are given quality safety training. It is believed that, apart from providing additional resources in running training courses, the Labour Department should closely monitor the relevant training institutes, to ensure the qualities of the safety training courses.

In recent years, the Government has been advocating the concept of safety audit and self-regulation, suggesting that the responsibility should be shared among employees, employers and the Government, particularly employers and employees. It is hoped that a consensus can be reached in developing a safety culture at work. Whilst it is encouraging to know that the Government is committed to developing a safety culture at work, we don't think self-regulation alone is adequate in accomplishing this goal. In addition, the Government should undertake more responsibilities in this aspect by stepping up its efforts on legislation, enforcement and supervision, as well as to provide greater protection to employees' rights, so as to help building up a safety culture and improving the safety standards among employees.