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Mr. Stephen Wong
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URGENT

Dear Stephen,

Proposed Amendment of Section 2GG of
the Arbitration Ordinance (Cap.341)

I have read the Administration's paper on the above matter for discussion in the 21 March 2000 meeting of the Panel of Administration of Justice and Legal Services with great interest.

I am pleased to note that the Administration is in complete agreement with the profession, and is prepared to amend Cap.341 accordingly. I also note that the proposed amendment is straightforward and involves no change of government policy.

In these circumstances it seems a pity that the amendment has to be delayed to the next term of LegCo commencing 1 October 2000. The amendment will obviously save the public time and money, avoid wasting court time in unnecessary proceedings, and generally enhance Hong Kong's prestige and efficiency as an international arbitration centre.

In terms of logistics, it would be entirely possible to pass the amendment within the remainder of this session, provided the proposed amendment can be drafted without delay, and the House Committee is prepared to support it without the necessity of setting up a bills committee. Alternatively, the Administration may consider supporting an amendment by way of a private member's bill.