

For information

Legislative Council Panel on Trade and Industry

Publicity on Lodgement of Trade Declarations Electronically

Introduction

Further to LC Papers No. CB(1) 1938/98-99 and No. CB(1) 234/99-00, this paper informs Members of the publicity on services available for submission of import and export declarations (commonly known as trade declarations) through electronic means.

Background

2. We intend to make electronic data interchange (EDI) lodgement for trade declarations compulsory by April 2000. As a first step, the Legislative Council approved the legislative amendments to give effect to the withdrawal of postal lodgement of trade declarations. These amendments took effect from 1 April 1999. At present, about 75% of the trade declarations received by Government are lodged electronically and the remaining 25% are lodged through the collection counter of the Customs and Excise Department (C&ED).

3. To achieve compulsory lodgement by EDI by April 2000, we introduced into the Legislative Council the Industrial Training (Clothing Industry)(Amendment) Bill on 24 November and we will soon introduce the Import and Export (Registration)(Amendment) Regulations for approval by the Legislative Council to delete the option of lodgement of trade declarations in person at counters operated by the C&ED.

Publicity

4. Since July 1999, the C&ED has informed importers and exporters using its counter service for lodgement of trade declarations that the

paper-based method will be replaced completely by electronic means by April 2000. We have asked some 30 major business associations to bring the same message to their members. We also explained the proposed change to the Small and Medium Enterprises Committee at its meeting in September 1999.

5. In preparation for the compulsory EDI submission of trade declarations in April 2000, Tradelink and the Government plan to organise additional publicity measures to promote awareness of the change. These measures include setting up a sales booth by Tradelink at the Hong Kong Collection Office (HKCO) of the C&ED, displaying a publicity banner at the HKCO, distributing leaflets and notices to all HKCO users, issuing press releases, putting up posters at Government departments concerned and Government Authorised Certification Organisations (GACOs), displaying messages at websites, organising seminars, revising the text for C&ED's enquiry hotline to announce the closure of the HKCO by April 2000, mailing to traders who are still submitting paper documents, printing a reminder on receipt of trade declarations on the forthcoming changes, displaying messages by electronic billboard at the HKCO and issuing notices to traders during survey to be conducted by the Census and Statistics Department.

6. Publicity activities to be organised from January 2000 onward include TV and press advertisements, press releases, seminars, pamphlets on closure of the HKCO for distribution, letters to GACOs and major business associations seeking their assistance to publicize the date of closure of the HKCO to their members and revision of the booklet 'How to Complete and Lodge Import/Export Declarations'.

Possibility of Electronic Mail Submission

7. At present, traders must register as customers and install the required software to link up with the system of Tradelink before they may submit trade declarations electronically. However, Tradelink is currently conducting a trial run of submission of trade declarations through the Internet. If successful, this service will become fully operational in early 2000 and publicity on this new service is scheduled to commence in December 1999.