

Speaking notes for Mr. Robert Tsoi in attending a Bills Committee meeting  
on 24 June 2003 regarding the proposed Construction Workers Registration Scheme

- The setting up of a registration scheme for construction workers has always been one of the top priority of the construction industry. Our hope is that once this registration framework is established in the industry, not only will the planning of manpower supply be better facilitated, the skills of construction workers will also be generally uplifted in the long run. Such a scheme will attest to the professional standard of our construction workers, and help us win the recognition from the community of our contribution to Hong Kong's economy.
- The success of this scheme hinges very much on the participation and cooperation of all concerned parties, from clients to workers. We need to ensure that the set of requirements for registration will be fair to all and realistically reflect the true standard of the workers. They should be practical, practicable, flexible yet not too lenient as to demean the standards for qualification.
- Towards this common goal, a Working Group has been formed some time ago under the auspices of the Environment, Transport and Works Bureau, comprising representatives of Government bodies, developer-clients, professional bodies, contractors and workers' unions. REDA is also a party. After prolonged deliberation, a consensus has been reached concerning the transitional and provisional registration arrangement for the registration.
- Under our agreed scheme, an once-and-for-all total exemption will be allowed for the senior workers (over 10-year experience) in the industry who have attained a status of seniority and skills through decades of involvement in the industry yet do not possess the requisite qualifications. They will not be required to sit for the trade tests. For those workers who have accumulated over 6 years of experience, a 3-year grace period will be provided for whilst temporarily registered. Within these 3 years they will be allowed to sit for the tests for unlimited times.

- With the criteria as above we believe that a balance has been struck. These criteria have taken into account the interests and concerns of all stakeholders in the industry. They are also practical in minimizing the disruption to the industry and the hardship to workers. This arrangement has the support of REDA.
- As much as I appreciate the good intention behind certain voices in the industry advocating for a relaxation of the exemption criteria, I must point out that it is neither fair, nor beneficial to the overall interests of the construction workers and the construction industry.
- It would not be fair to those 50,000 fully-skilled and semi-skilled workers who have achieved their registration through hard work and passing the trade test. They would face the reality that their qualification would be a “devalued” one, as other workers without the necessary skills would still be given the certification by claiming 5 to 6 years of relevant experience.
- It would not be beneficial to the overall interests of the construction workers and the construction industry, as it would undermine our ongoing efforts to upgrade the skills and thereby the status of construction workers, and belie the construction industry’s avowed commitment to upgrade performance standard and guarantee product quality.