

CSO/ADM CR 14/3231/97

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7 May 2004

The Honourable Ms Miriam Lau, JP
Chairman of the House Committee
Legislative Council
8 Jackson Road
Central
Hong Kong

Proposed Priority in the Scrutiny of Bills by Members

I am writing to propose a revised priority order for the House Committee's scrutiny of the eight Government bills on the waiting list as at **Annex**. In response to the letter from the Legislative Council Secretariat of 3 May 2004, we have also set out at Annex the Administration's proposed priority for Dr the Hon Eric Li's Member's bill, viz. the Professional Accountants (Amendment) Bill 2004. We note that the Member's bill has the support of the LegCo Financial Affairs Panel.

Revised Priority Order of Government Bills

Taking account of the very limited time available between now and the end of the current LegCo term, and the number and substance of the Government bills awaiting scrutiny by LegCo, the Administration has critically reviewed the relative priorities of the outstanding bills. The **Annex** sets out our revised priority order as a result of this review.

Of the eight Government bills on the waiting list, we propose that top priorities be accorded to the Merchant Shipping (Security of Ships and Port Facilities) Bill and the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill in that order.

Government Bill

Merchant Shipping (Security of Ships and Port Facilities) Bill

The bill seeks to fulfill the obligations of the HKSAR under an international convention by strengthening security measures on ships and port facilities. The measures aim to reduce their vulnerability from security threats and to avoid them from being used as means of unlawful activities including terrorism, piracy and other forms of criminal acts. As the new maritime security measures under the relevant international convention will take effect internationally on 1 July 2004, we should endeavour to have the bill enacted before the end of the current legislative term.

Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill

The bill seeks to relax the current statutory limit on the gross vehicle weight of light buses to allow for the installation of new safety and passenger equipment on new light buses including seat belts and high back seats. We are committed to putting in place these new safety measures and other new safety requirements for public light buses by August 2004, hence the urgency to have the bill enacted within the current legislative term. In the interim, there is assurance from vehicle manufacturers that they would complete adjustments to their production lines to meet the above timetable.

Member's Bill

Professional Accountants (Amendment) Bill 2004

Having regard to the urgency of the two Government bills set out above, the Administration proposes to also accord priority for the scrutiny of this Member's bill, i.e. it would become the third priority after the Merchant Shipping (Security of Ships and Port Facilities) Bill and the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill.

I should be grateful if you would help put forward our above proposal for Members' consideration at the coming House Committee meeting on 7 May 2004. I am copying this letter to the Chairman and the Clerk of the LegCo Financial Affairs Panel to keep them posted of our position on the Professional Accountants (Amendment) Bill 2004.

(Ms CHANG King-yiu)
Director of Administration

Encl.

c.c. Hon Ambrose LAU Hon-chuen, GBS, JP
Dr Hon Eric LI Ka-cheung, GBS, JP
Clerk to the LegCo Financial Affairs Panel

Annex

The Administration's Proposed Priority of Bills on the Waiting List for Bills Committee Slots

1. Merchant Shipping (Security of Ships and Port Facilities) Bill
2. Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill 2003
- [3. Professional Accountants (Amendment) Bill 2004 – Member's Bill]
4. Criminal Procedure (Amendment) Bill
5. Vocational Training Council (Amendment) Bill 2003
6. Bankruptcy (Amendment) Bill 2003
7. Waste Disposal (Amendment) Bill 2003
8. Undesirable Medical Advertisements (Amendment) Bill 2004
9. Construction Industry Council Bill