

香港特別行政區政府
工商及科技局
工商科



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13 April 2007

Miss Erin TSANG
Clerk to the Panel on Commerce and Industry
Legislative Council
Legislative Council Building
8 Jackson Road, Central
Hong Kong

By Fax: 2869 6794

Dear Miss TSANG,

Electronic Advance Cargo Information

At the meeting of the Legislative Council Panel on Commerce and Industry held on 16 January 2007, the Panel gave in-principle support for the Administration's proposal to implement an electronic advance cargo information (e-ACI) system for customs clearance of road cargoes.

Some Members also asked the Administration to consider obviating the submission of paper manifests in future by putting in place an electronic road cargo manifest (ROMAN) system¹. On this point, we undertook to revert to the Panel after further consultation with the industry stakeholders concerned.

Consultation with industry stakeholders

The Administration further consulted representatives of the trucking industry in February 2007. We conveyed to them the views given at the Panel meeting in January as follows -

¹ Comparison of the e-ACI system and the ROMAN system are set out in the attached information note.

- (a) the ROMAN system should bring benefits to truck drivers, by obviating the need for them to submit paper manifests;
- (b) as the Mainland Customs has adopted electronic customs clearance since 2003, truck drivers should have been familiar with the electronic submission of cargo information; and
- (c) shippers should be willing to help input cargo data to assist truck drivers in the electronic submission of cargo manifests and the Government should provide the necessary training.

The representatives reiterated their concerns about the ROMAN system – i.e. some truck drivers failed to see tangible benefits from such an arrangement, but they would need to incur additional costs by acquiring the necessary IT capabilities and equipment; they also pointed to the practical difficulty for some truck drivers to submit all the manifest data electronically in light of the time-critical nature of road freight operations, particularly the south-bound one. We also understand that some data required in a road cargo manifest may sometimes only be available at the last minute before boundary crossing.

In proposing the e-ACI system, the Administration seeks to achieve the objective of electronic customs clearance early, while minimizing any possible disruption to the existing mode of cross-boundary freight operations of the stakeholders concerned. As we have taken into full account their views and state of IT readiness, we have secured a broad industry consensus, including representatives of shippers, freight forwarders, truck drivers and express couriers on the e-ACI system. The Hong Kong Logistics Development Council has also pledged support for early implementation of the system.

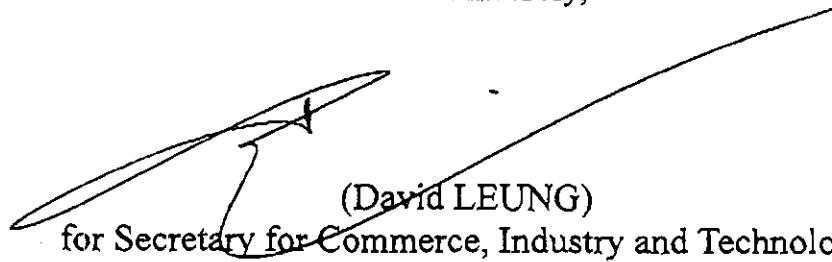
Way Forward

We share some Members' vision of putting in place an electronic infrastructure for automating the processing of road cargo manifests. The Administration intends to pursue this vision by adopting a three-pronged approach –

- (a) adopting a modular system configuration in designing the e-ACI system so that it can be enhanced promptly as and when the conditions are ripe, to cater for the submission of all data in a road cargo manifest electronically;
- (b) continuing our dialogue with the industry stakeholders concerned on the feasibility of submitting the remaining manifest data electronically. C&ED will explore IT solution to enable them to input manifest data easily; and
- (c) stepping up efforts to promote the general awareness and capability of the stakeholders concerned to keep up with the trend of IT and e-logistics development.

The Administration shall also keep in view global, regional and national developments in electronic customs clearance to ensure that Hong Kong will keep abreast with these developments.

Yours sincerely,



(David LEUNG)
for Secretary for Commerce, Industry and Technology

Encl.

c.c. Commissioner for Customs and Excise (Attn: Mr K Chow)

Comparison of the e-ACI system and the ROMAN system

A road cargo manifest contains a total of 17 data fields. The cargo data in eight of these fields (plus the vehicle registration number) are essential for the Customs and Excise Department (C&ED) to conduct risk profiling in advance. Provision of the cargo data in the remaining fields is not as time-critical, but such data are still required by the Government for other purposes such as on-the-spot cargo examination on the selected vehicles, compilation of trade statistics and trade controls.

Under the e-ACI system, the shipper will be required to provide cargo data in the eight essential fields to C&ED electronically and in advance for the purpose of customs clearance. The shipper will receive a customs reference number in return; whereas the truck driver will be required to report to C&ED the reference number and the vehicle registration number (i.e. the "bundling" act) through mobile phone or other simple electronic means, at least 30 minutes before crossing the land boundary control point (LBCP). The present legal responsibility for a truck driver to submit paper manifest will remain unchanged. C&ED will also set up collection boxes at the Immigration kiosks in LBCPs to facilitate truck drivers in dropping paper manifests.

Under the ROMAN system, the truck driver will be required to provide all the 17 manifest data to C&ED electronically before crossing the LBCP. This system will obviate the need for the truck driver to drop a paper manifest at the LBCP.

Both the e-ACI system and the ROMAN system allow C&ED to conduct adequate risk profiling, thereby enabling Hong Kong to meet the emerging international and regional customs standards. These standards are underpinned by the core requirement for the provision of e-ACI to Customs authorities. Both systems will enable C&ED to formulate further customs facilitation measures, such as one-stop customs clearance for transshipment cargoes.