

LC: Speech by SLW on moving second reading of Social Workers Registration (Amendment) Bill 2024

Following is the speech by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare (SLW), Mr Chris Sun, on moving the second reading of the Social Workers Registration (Amendment) Bill 2024 at the Legislative Council today (May 22):

President,

I move the second reading of the Social Workers Registration (Amendment) Bill 2024. The objective of the Bill is to improve the governance of the Social Workers Registration Board to ensure that the Board acts in the public interest and fosters the progressive development of the social work profession.

Registered social workers (RSWs) shoulder great responsibilities. They bear social responsibilities towards the clients with whom they are in frequent contact. As social workers have the trust of their clients and exert on them significant influence, they are more obliged to honour the rule of law as well as consciously safeguard national security, social order and public interest, while performing their duties in a fair and impartial manner to set a good example. The Social Workers Registration Ordinance empowers the Board to handle registration of social workers, disciplinary control and related matters. Apart from being empowered by law to handle registration of social workers and disciplinary matters, the Board, in exercising its public powers, bears responsibilities towards the clients of RSWs and the community as a whole, and has a duty to safeguard national security and act in the public interest.

Noting that the Board's conduct and decisions in recent years have seriously deviated from the spirit of the Ordinance in the areas of social worker registrations, disciplinary control and professional development, the Government considers that there is an urgent need to improve the governance of the Board so that it can more effectively protect the public interest and safeguard national security. In this connection, the Government proposes the following amendments to the Ordinance:

(1) The Bill will expand the membership of the Board for broader and more balanced participation. I wish to stress that upon the Board's reconstitution, RSWs will continue to account for more than half of the seats of the Board with at least 14 RSWs among the 27 members. On the premise of ensuring professional self-regulation, the Government will appoint RSWs of diverse backgrounds and positions to the Board to complement Board members returned by election, so that different voices within the social work profession will be brought into the Board and reflected in its decisions. In addition, appointing more members from other professions and prominent personalities from different sectors of the community will bring in a

broader, more diverse and balanced participation in the Board to provide the checks and balances required for ensuring that the public interest will be safeguarded;

(2) The Bill will enable prompt removal of RSWs convicted of serious offences. Registrations of social workers are renewed annually. Where a social worker has committed a serious offence but his/her registration has not yet expired, his/her case would normally be considered upon the next renewal of his/her registration according to the current practice. Such practice cannot ensure that the interest of clients would be protected and is not in line with the legislative intent. The objective of the new mechanism is to ensure that the Board can promptly deal with cases of registrations by social workers who have committed serious offences. I must emphasise that we have no intention to bar ex-offenders from becoming social workers across the board. Given that social workers shoulder social responsibilities towards clients of disadvantaged groups, we consider that the Board needs to strike a proper balance between the interest of individual applicants for registration and the public interest, by promptly and meticulously processing applications for registration involving serious offences, so as to live up to the expectations of society;

(3) The Bill will lend clarity to the effective date of the Code of Practice for Registered Social Workers and the appointment to the Disciplinary Committee Panel, which will be the date on which the SLW publishes a notice in the Gazette. This will enable the SLW to better perform his gate-keeping role;

(4) The Bill will empower the Board to set continuing professional development (CPD) requirements for the social work profession. The objective of CPD is to ensure that the social work profession can meet the changing service needs of the community and continue to serve the best interest of the needy, while promoting the long-term and sustainable development of the social work profession. I wish to point out that the relevant amendment provisions only empower the Board to set CPD requirements, but do not prescribe an implementation timetable. The content, approach and timetable of the future CPD requirements of RSWs will be devised by the Board, the majority of which will be RSWs. I believe that the Board will strike a balance among factors such as the sector's manpower and workload situation as well as professional development need in taking forward the work on this front in a pragmatic and orderly manner, with a view to promoting the long-term development of the social work profession; and

(5) The Bill will require all members of the Board to take an oath. They must sign an oath before the assumption of office, affirming that they will uphold the Basic Law and bear allegiance to the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China, and return the signed oath within the period specified by the SLW. A person must not take up the office or continue to hold the office as a member of the Board if he/she declines or neglects to take the oath, or if the SLW is satisfied that the person does not genuinely and truthfully take the oath. In addition, the breach of the oath will be a valid ground for the Chief Executive to declare a Board member's office to be vacant.

We briefed the Legislative Council (LegCo) Panel on Welfare Services on May 16, 2024, on the proposal, and Members supported the Bill. I am also pleased to learn that the social welfare sector, the LegCo and various sectors of the community, including some members of the Board, are supportive of our efforts in improving the governance of the Board as soon as possible.

The Government will fully complement the work of the LegCo in scrutinising the Bill, with a view to seeking Members' support and early passage of the Bill, so that the Board will be put back on the right track the soonest possible. President, I so submit.

Thank you, President.

Fraudulent website related to Bank Julius Baer & Co. Ltd.

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority:

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) wishes to alert members of the public to a press release issued by Bank Julius Baer & Co. Ltd. relating to a fraudulent website, which has been reported to the HKMA. A hyperlink to the press release is available on the [HKMA website](#).

The HKMA wishes to remind the public that banks will not send SMS or emails with embedded hyperlinks which direct them to the banks' websites to carry out transactions. They will not ask customers for sensitive personal information, such as login passwords or one-time password, by phone, email or SMS (including via embedded hyperlinks).

Anyone who has provided his or her personal information, or who has conducted any financial transactions, through or in response to the website concerned, should contact the bank using the contact information provided in the press release, and report the matter to the Police by contacting the Crime Wing Information Centre of the Hong Kong Police Force at 2860 5012.

Phishing emails related to Bank of China (Hong Kong) Limited

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority:

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) wishes to alert members of the public to a press release issued by Bank of China (Hong Kong) Limited relating to phishing emails, which have been reported to the HKMA. A hyperlink to the press release is available on the [HKMA website](#).

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[CE meets Executive Director of United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime \(with photo\)](#)

The Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, met with the visiting Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and Director-General of the United Nations Office at Vienna, Ms Ghada Fathi Waly, today (May 22). The Commissioner of the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC), Mr Woo Ying-ming, also attended the meeting.

Mr Lee welcomed Ms Waly's visit to Hong Kong with her delegation to attend the 8th ICAC Symposium commencing today, and sign a Memorandum of Understanding on behalf of the UNODC with the ICAC to further strengthen collaboration on promoting international anti-corruption. Mr Lee said that the dedication of the UNODC to leading its member countries to combat drugs, organised crime and terrorism has been highly valued.

Noting that Hong Kong is one of the cleanest cities in the world, Mr Lee attributed the achievement to the determination of the Government, a robust legal system and public support. The ICAC has strived to strengthen liaison with its overseas counterparts to push forward the effective implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption, promoting Hong Kong's anti-corruption achievements to the global community and the international graft-fighting collaborations. As part of these efforts, the ICAC has joined the UNODC's Global Operational Network of Anti-Corruption Law Enforcement Authorities to share its anti-corruption experiences with other representatives from various places. The Hong Kong International Academy

Against Corruption, which was established early this year, co-organised an international anti-corruption training programme with the network to provide a learning platform for graft fighters from all over the world. In addition, with the support of the Central Government, the ICAC Commissioner has been the President of the International Association of Anti-Corruption Authorities (IAACA) since 2022. The ICAC co-hosted the Symposium with the IAACA to gather representatives of anti-corruption agencies and experts around the world to exchange views on global challenges and strategies in anti-graft work, he added.

Mr Lee said that the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government will continue to work closely with the UNODC to promote experience-sharing among their anti-graft counterparts and advance the international anti-corruption cause together.



LCQ1: Road safety of cyclists

Following is a question by the Hon Lee Chun-keung and a reply by the Secretary for Transport and Logistics, Mr Lam Sai-hung, in the Legislative Council today (May 22):

Question:

It is learnt that public demand for food delivery services has been keen in recent years and most takeaway food couriers deliver takeaway food by bicycles, leading to a significant increase in the number of bicycles on roads. Many motorists have relayed that some cyclists have a weak awareness of obeying traffic regulations, including not wearing helmets and riding fast on roads, which affects the safety of other road users. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of summonses issued as well as the numbers of traffic accidents and casualties involving cyclists contravening traffic regulations

in each of the past five years and, among such accidents, the numbers of those involving takeaway food couriers;

(2) whether it will step up training, education and publicity on cycling among takeaway food couriers, so as to enhance their road safety awareness and reduce traffic accidents involving them; and

(3) whether it will consider requiring cyclists to obtain specific licences by taking tests and wear reflective clothing when cycling, and stipulating that bicycles must be fitted with reflective markings before they can be used on roads; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Government attaches great importance to cycling safety and, where road safety considerations and circumstances permit, foster a "bicycle-friendly environment" by constructing or improving cycle tracks and related facilities in new development areas and new towns, with a view to facilitating the public to use bicycles for short-distance commuting or recreational purposes and thereby reducing the use of mechanised transport. In urban areas, the traffic is generally very heavy while the roads are narrow and crowded, and there are frequent on-street loading and unloading activities with many vehicles passing and stopping by the roadside for a brief period of time. Due to road safety considerations, the Government does not encourage the public to use bicycles as a mode of transport in urban areas. The Transport Department (TD) and the Hong Kong Police Force (the Police) have been monitoring and analysing the statistics and situation of cycling accidents, implementing appropriate enhancement measures, and rolling out publicity and public education activities.

In consultation with the TD and the Police, I would like to reply to the question raised by the Hon Lee Chun-keung as follows:

(1) The numbers of prosecutions against cycling offences and the numbers of accidents and casualties involving bicycles (including cyclists and other road users killed/injured in the accidents) in each of the past five years are tabulated below:

Year	Number of prosecutions [^]	Number of accidents				Number of casualties			
		Fatal#	Serious#	Slight#	Total	Killed	Seriously injured	Slightly injured	Total
2019	2 350	8	183	1 547	1 738	8	186	1 605	1 799
2020	4 018	17	457	2 263	2 737	17	460	2 345	2 822
2021	6 768	8	507	2 479	2 994	8	508	2 601	3 117
2022	5 832	10	143	2 071	2 224	10	144	2 156	2 310
2023	4 094	6*	104*	1 866*	1 976*	6*	106*	1 935*	2 047*

^ The numbers of prosecutions cover traffic offences involving the use of bicycles, including reckless or careless cycling, cycling without switching on the lights during hours of darkness, not following traffic signals or signs, carrying passengers when cycling and cycling on pavements.

A "fatal accident" is an accident in which one or more persons die within 30 days of the accident; a "serious accident" is an accident in which one or more persons are injured and stayed in hospital for more than 12 hours; and a "slight accident" is an accident in which one or more persons are injured or stayed in hospital for not more than 12 hours if necessary.

* Provisional figures

Both the TD and the Police have not maintained a breakdown of the number of traffic accidents and related casualties involving couriers of food delivery. The Police conducted a one-off thematic study in respect of traffic accidents involving bicycles (including fatal and seriously injured cases) occurred in the first six months of 2021, and collated the number of traffic accidents and casualties related to food delivery. The findings indicated that the number of cycling accidents involving food delivery with fatal and seriously injured cases accounted for about 0.1 per cent (i.e. about one of a thousand) of the total number of traffic accidents across the city during the same period, with eight people seriously injured and no fatalities. Overall speaking, the number of traffic accidents and casualties involving bicycles has shown a downward trend since 2021.

(2) The Government will continue enhancing the safety awareness of road users through publicity, education and enforcement work. The TD has been collaborating with the Road Safety Council and the Police in launching various publicity and educational activities with a view to promoting road safety to all road users (including cyclists). Examples include publishing and distributing the Road Safety Bulletins and publicity publications, organising road safety seminars for food delivery platforms, affixing full-height publicity posters to traffic signal controllers, making and telecasting publicity video clips on the Internet, disseminating cycling safety information through social media platforms and so forth, so that cyclists understand road safety matters that require their attention, including following the traffic rules at all times and wearing personal protective gear (such as safety helmets). The Police will also visit various community centres, bicycle rental shops, cycling clubs, automobile associations and food delivery operators, etc, to promote cycling safety information and remind road users to pay attention to cycling safety.

(3) Same as the common practice in other regions, there is currently no requirement in Hong Kong for cyclists to obtain the relevant driving licenses. However, as bicycles are regarded as vehicles, cyclists have the same obligation to follow the laws and regulations applicable to drivers when cycling on the road. These include the relevant provisions of the Road Traffic Ordinance (Cap. 374) and its subsidiary legislation, as well as the Road Users' Code (RUC). Among the ten chapters in the RUC, one of them is "For Cyclists". Failing to observe the RUC may be taken into account by the

court when deciding the liability of a road user and whether he/she was in contravention of the laws, and to what extent it was his/her fault. Therefore, cyclists should observe the RUC to safeguard the safety of themselves and other road users.

On the requirements of reflectors, the Road Traffic (Construction and Maintenance of Vehicles) Regulations (Cap. 374A) already contain the relevant mandatory requirements, specifying the standards of installation of reflectors on bicycles. Moreover, according to the RUC, cyclists are required to wear bright, light-coloured, fluorescent or reflective clothing or wear reflective belts to make themselves more visible (including in the dark and in poor light) to other road users.

The Government will closely monitor the issue of cycling safety and continue its efforts on publicity and education to encourage cyclists to pay attention to and comply with the relevant laws and regulations, thereby promoting public awareness of cycling safety and reducing traffic accidents. In addition, cycling safety is one of the "selected traffic enforcement priorities", and the Police will take enforcement actions against cycling violations.

Thank you, President.