

Shipping Legislation (Electronic Certificates and Electronic Documents) (Amendment) Bill 2024 to be gazetted on Friday

The Shipping Legislation (Electronic Certificates and Electronic Documents) (Amendment) Bill 2024 will be published in the Gazette this Friday (May 24) to amend three pieces of shipping legislation, namely the Shipping and Port Control Ordinance (Cap. 313), Merchant Shipping (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Ordinance (Cap. 413) and Merchant Shipping (Local Vessels) Ordinance (Cap. 548), to facilitate the use of electronic certificates/licences/permits/documents (collectively referred to as e-certs) for local vessels and their operators, as well as visiting ocean-going vessels.

The use of e-certs and electronic logbooks (e-logbooks) for Hong Kong-registered ships and local vessels was announced in the Chief Executive's 2022 Policy Address, with a view to further enhancing the efficiency of marine services. Phase 1 of the amendment to marine legislations came into force on July 21, 2023, and implemented the use of e-certs and e-logbooks for Hong Kong-registered ships and their seafarers. The current legislative amendment mainly aims to extend the use of e-certs to local vessels, their operators, and visiting ocean-going vessels.

A spokesman for the Transport and Logistics Bureau today (May 22) said, "In line with the goal of digitalisation of government services and the trend of digitalisation in the maritime and shipping sector, we introduce legislative amendments to provide greater convenience to shipowners and vessel operators when applying for and obtaining relevant certificates and documents. This will further enhance the efficiency of marine services and contribute to the image and status of Hong Kong as an international maritime centre."

The Panel on Economic Development of the Legislative Council (LegCo), the Local Vessels Advisory Committee and the Port Operations Committee of the Marine Department have been consulted. Members supported the proposal.

The Bill will be introduced into the LegCo on June 5.