

## **A PRC Registered Coastal Vessel “利興順” Foundered and Sank East of Wong Nai Chau (黃泥洲)**

### **A. The Incident**

In the early morning of 19 December 2003, while on passage from Hong Kong to Shantou, the People’s Republic of China (PRC) registered coastal vessel “Li Xing Shun” (利興順) (Fig. 1) capsized and sank in the approximate position 22° 21.'56N 114° 27.'69E, at about 4 nautical miles east of Wong Nai Chau (黃泥洲). The cargo of twenty-seven containers went down with the vessel. All eight crewmembers on board were safely rescued by Police launch. There were no loss of life, no injury and no oil pollution reported in this case.

### **B. Findings**

1. At the time of the incident the weather conditions were reported to be adverse. Strong monsoon signal was hoisted and northerly wind at force 7-8 and waves of 4.0 to 5.5 metres in height were prevailing in the area.

2. The investigation has revealed that the progressive flooding of the cargo hold by seawater through the open hatch had caused the vessel to capsize and sink. The vessel was taken out to sea in a fully laden condition with its cargo hold hatch cover not in position. As the vessel proceeded into more exposed area to the east of Hong Kong, it encountered heavy weather. Heavy seas swamped on deck and entered into the cargo hold. Despite efforts by the crew in pumping out the seawater, due to limited pumping capacity the cargo hold was progressively flooded and caused the vessel to capsize.

3. The investigation has identified that the main contributory factor leading to the accident is the lack of awareness of the Master on the safe navigation of his vessel. Besides leaving the cargo hatch open, he had also failed to collect the necessary vessel and weather information in preparation for the voyage. Without such information he would not be able to assess the likely risk that the vessel might encounter, and take precautionary measures in advance. As a result the vessel was led to a dangerous situation that neither the vessel nor the crewmembers on board had the capability to handle.

### **C. The Lessons**

1. Vessels with open cargo hatch are susceptible to flooding, especially in adverse weather conditions. The sea conditions in the Hong Kong harbour can be deceptively calm whilst rough seas can prevail in exposed waters outside the harbour. It is

therefore imperative that masters of vessels should obtain the necessary vessel and weather information before departure, and to carry out proper assessment on the likely risk that may be encountered during the voyage, before taking their vessels to the open sea.

2. The prevailing weather report and weather forecast for the intended voyage are important information to be assessed to ensure safety of navigation. The local radio stations broadcast general weather report at half hourly intervals. In addition, the Dial-a-Weather service provided by Hong Kong Observatory is also available to members of the public who wish to obtain the latest weather forecast. Telephone numbers for listening to the Cantonese, Putonghua and English bulletins are 1878200, 1878202 and 1878066 respectively.



Fig. 1 A photo of “利興順”