

Collision between high speed passenger ferry Nan Sha 38 and mainland container vessel 中航 908 on 17 February 2005 resulting in 102 injuries

1. The Incident

- 1.1 At about 0812 on 17 February 2005, a Chinese registered passenger high-speed craft Nan Sha No. 38 with 156 passengers on board collided with a mainland container vessel 中航908 near south west of Tsing Yi Island. The collision took place in restricted visibility conditions as the bow of Nan Sha No. 38 collided into the port side forward of 中航908. The speed of Nan Sha No. 38 was recorded to be 40 knots before the collision.
- 1.2 Nan Sha No. 38 sustained a serious structural damage at the bow whilst 中航908 sustained minor dent at the port side shell plating. The collision caused 102 passenger injuries on board the Nan Sha No. 38. Four of them were in serious condition. There was no reported injury on board 中航908.

2. Findings

- 2.1 The probable cause of the accident is identified to be vessel operating of unsafe speed in restricted visibility. The condition of the Speed Restriction Exemption Permit (SREP) when the visibility was less than one nautical mile might not be followed.
- 2.2 Vessel might have failed to follow the principal Fairway and took a short cut to pass the southwest corner of Tsing Yi Island. The other vessel might have also navigated at the wrong side of the Ma Wan Fairway.
- 2.3 The Master of both vessels failed to detect the presence of other on the radar at an earlier stage.
- 2.4 Due to high frequency traffic movement of High Speed Craft (HSC) and their high speed, under the existing arrangement it would be difficult to track and identify instantly the echoes of a HSC on the Vessel Traffic Centre (VTC) radar display.
- 2.5 The ultimate decision of slowing down the vessel is left to individual Master after assessing the local visibility condition. The situation is not considered satisfactory as a number of HSC Masters were found violating the condition of SREP for

speeding in fog.

- 2.6 Given the tight sailing schedule between ports, there appeared no provision in the company's procedures that could give the Master discretion for him to slow down the vessel in restricted visibility. The tendency for the Master to operate on a tight sailing schedule, which might put pressure on him in endeavoring to meet the sailing schedule without due consideration of operational safety.
- 2.7 Passive attitude of the cabin crew in the caring of passengers was found in general. The cabin crew appears to be deficient in their safety awareness. The ferry company also failed to monitor properly on their performance standard.

3. Lessons

- 3.1 The High Speed Craft Consultative Committee may consider installation of Automatic Identification System to all existing passenger HSC in enabling identification and monitoring under the VTC.
- 3.2 The VTC is recommended to consider giving advice on the validity of SREP during the broadcast of fog warning.
- 3.3 The ferry company is recommended to review its procedures and sailing arrangement in ensuring safe navigation during restricted visibility situation. The procedures should also give discretion to the HSC Masters in case of delay.
- 3.4 The ferry company should develop measures of continuous improvement to its crew with a view to enhance the safety awareness. The performance standard of the crew should also be monitored during their course of duty.