Fatal accident happened on board a Hong Kong registered MV “Han Zhang” at Heshang Island, Dalian, China on 24 November 2012

1. The Incident

1.1 On 24 November 2012 at 1310 hours (Local Time), the jib of No. 2 deck crane on board the Hong Kong registered general cargo ship “Han Zhang” collapsed and fell onto the cargoes above No.1 hatch cover while the ship was alongside a berth at Heshang Island, Dalian, China.

1.2 While the crane operator operated the crane for lifting operation, he did not notice the alert given by the signaler but continued to turn the No.2 crane until its jib reached and rested on the No.1 crane. The crane operator then slewed the No.2 crane back trying to move the jib away from the No.1 crane. The No. 2 jib and its associated wire suddenly fell down after the jib was off the No.1 crane. The falling wire hit a stevedore who was working on the cargoes above the No. 1 hatch cover, he was seriously injured and subsequently sent to the hospital for medical treatment, but was certified dead later on the same.

1.3 The investigation into the accident revealed that the main contributing factors to the accident are:

a) The luffing wire rope might have been slackened after the jib of the No. 2 crane was leaned against the jib of the No. 1 crane due to human error. As the No. 2 jib was turned away from the No. 1 jib, it lost its support and fell under gravity.

b) The crane operator and the signaler did not follow closely the requirements as listed in the Code of Safe Working Practices for Merchant Seamen.

c) The ship staff did not follow the Ship Safety Operation Guidelines of the Shipping Company to ensure that nobody worked or stayed in the area covered by the crane jib while the cranes were in operation.

2. Lessons Learnt

To avoid recurrence of similar accident, it is important that:

i. The effectiveness of the safety management system regarding the safe operation of cranes is needed to be reviewed;

ii. Only crewmembers who are competent, experienced and well-trained are allowed to be assigned for the crane operations;

iii. Crewmembers should strictly follow company procedures for the safe operation of all equipment and machinery onboard the ship;

iv. Crewmembers should strictly follow Code of Safe Working Practices for Merchant Seamen in all lifting operation and maintenance of all lifting machinery on board; and

v. Proper culture of communication is needed to be established between crewmembers.