

New Director of Marine assumes post

Mr Michael Wong Wai-lun assumed the post of Director of Marine on February 27, succeeding Mr Francis Liu, who has retired after 27 years of service with the Government.

Commenting on Mr Wong's appointment, the Secretary for the Civil Service, Mr Paul Tang, said Mr Wong is a seasoned Administrative Officer with rich experience in public administration and proven leadership and management skills. Mr Tang has every confidence that Mr Wong will ably lead the Marine Department to meet various upcoming challenges.

IMO Secretary-General visits Hong Kong

The Secretary-General of the International Maritime Organization (IMO), Mr Koji Sekimizu, visited Hong Kong in early March to learn the latest developments of the maritime affairs of Hong Kong.

Mr Sekimizu met with the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Professor Anthony Cheung Bing-leung, to discuss the maritime, port and shipping industries in Hong Kong. He also met with the Under Secretary for the Environment, Ms Christine Loh, on measures to prevent air pollution from ships.

On March 3, Mr Sekimizu visited the Marine Department where he discussed with the Director of Marine, Mr Michael Wong, the progress of implementing international maritime conventions. Following the meeting, Mr Sekimizu visited the Vessel Traffic Centre and Maritime Rescue Co-ordination Centre, and the Marine Department officers briefed him on the two centres' daily operations.

During his visit in Hong Kong, Mr Sekimizu toured the port facilities and met with representatives of the local shipping industry. He also visited the Hong Kong Observatory, Kai Tak Cruise Terminal, Maritime Services Training Institute of the Vocational Training Council, Hong Kong Maritime Museum, Hong Kong Science and Technology Park and the Legislative Council Complex.

Effective implementation of port security measures in HK

Representatives of the United States Coast Guard (USCG) visited Hong Kong from February 11 to 13 to share experience and best practices in the implementation of the International Ship and Port Facility Security Code (ISPS Code).

The USCG representatives met the Director of Marine and the members of the Hong Kong Port Facility Security Working Group. They also visited the Hongkong International Terminals and the Kai Tak Cruise Terminal.

During the meeting, both sides exchanged views in implementing the ISPS Code on port facilities security and ship security. The USCG representatives were impressed by Hong Kong security personnel's extensive knowledge on ISPS Code. They particularly commended Hong Kong's practice of issuing the "Letter of Recognition for serving as a Port Facility Security Officer" to qualified security officers.

It was agreed that the ISPS Code has been well implemented in Hong Kong and that the government agencies and port facilities have successfully established a close cooperation.

Closer communication with IACS

A delegation from the International Association of Classification Societies Ltd. (IACS), led by Chairman Mr Roberto Cazzulo, visited the Marine Department (MD) on February 10.

In the meeting, representatives of the MD and IACS exchanged views on several matters. The MD introduced the work of the Hong Kong Shipping Register and its mission to promote excellence in marine services, whilst IACS briefed the initiatives introduced on monitoring vessel quality and members' performance.

In regard to the environment and sustainability, both sides discussed the latest development regarding the control of emissions from ships and tightened international standards on pollutants emitted by vessels.

The MD and the IACS also agreed to maintain closer communication and to seek co-operation opportunities on the International Maritime Organization's and the International Labour Organization's related matters in the future.

Dedicated to safe ships and clean seas, IACS makes a unique contribution to maritime safety and regulation through technical support, compliance verification, and research and development. More than 90% of the world's cargo carrying tonnage is covered by the classification design, construction and through-life compliance rules and standards set by the twelve Member Societies of IACS.

Career Expo attracts young blood to the maritime industry

To promote the many career opportunities in the maritime industry in Hong Kong, the Marine Department (MD) and the Hong Kong Maritime Industry Council (MIC) set up booths at the Education and Careers Expo 2014 respectively from February 13 to 16 at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre.

At the MD's booth, staff introduced their work, shared their experience and answered visitors' enquires on required qualifications and career prospects. Visitors watched videos about the work of marine officers and surveyors of ships and also experienced steering a vessel in the harbour by using a full mission ship simulator.

The MIC's booth provided visitors with entry requirements and priority areas for careers in various maritime service sectors, including ship management, ship finance, ship broking, marine insurance, maritime law and maritime arbitration.

The MIC's booth also showcased various maritime-related education programmes offered by the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, the Maritime Services Training Institute of the Vocational Training Council and the Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education (Tsing Yi). Visitors could find information on the \$100 million "Maritime and Aviation Training Fund", as well as training incentive schemes such as the Hong Kong Maritime and Logistics Scholarship Scheme, the Hong Kong Maritime Law Scholarship Scheme, the Sea-going Training Incentive Scheme and the Ship Repair Training Incentive Scheme. A television programme about young people taking up a seafaring career was shown. Cadets also shared with visitors their experience working at sea.

Government launches Maritime and Aviation Training Fund

The Government announced on April 1 the launch of the \$100-million Maritime and Aviation Training Fund (the Fund) which aims to support manpower development for the maritime and aviation sectors. The Fund would be used, over a period of five years from 2014-15 to 2018-19, to sustain and enhance the five existing training schemes and scholarships, as well as to launch a series of new initiatives.

The new initiatives include the introduction of the Professional Training and Examination Refund Scheme, with a view to upgrading the professionalism of qualified in-service practitioners of the maritime and aviation sectors. Under the Scheme, qualified in-service practitioners can apply for a refund of 80 per cent of fees after completing or passing approved courses/examinations. Each individual may apply for fee reimbursement for more than one course/examination, up to a ceiling of \$18,000 per person. The scheme is now open for application.

Furthermore, an internship network will also be launched this summer to enhance the younger generation's early exposure to the operations and career prospects in the maritime and aviation sectors.

Other new initiatives include implementing the Local Vessel Trade Training Incentive Scheme to attract new recruits to the local vessel trade as coxswains or engine operators. The Fund will also support new promotion strategies and events to promote public awareness of the sectors and the career opportunities being offered.

In addition, part of the Fund will be used to sustain and enhance the existing schemes, including increasing the monthly subsidy provided for cadets under the existing Sea-going Training Incentive Scheme from \$5,000 to \$6,000 with effect from April 1.

Other existing training schemes and scholarships for the maritime sector run jointly by the Government and the Hong Kong Maritime Industry Council include the Hong Kong Maritime and Logistics Scholarship Scheme and the Hong Kong Maritime Law Scholarship Scheme. As maritime jobs are highly globalised, the Fund will provide selected Hong Kong students studying in these two programmes with an opportunity to undertake maritime-related courses at world-renowned universities.

Details of the new initiatives are being worked out through Government-industry-academia collaboration. A Tripartite Taskforce on Manpower Training under the Hong Kong Maritime Industry Council will monitor and review the implementation of the initiatives concerning the maritime sector. The Government will review the usage of the Fund regularly and fine-tune the implementation details in the light of practical experience and feedback.

Details and relevant application forms under the Fund are available at the Transport and Housing Bureau's website (www.thb.gov.hk).

Marine Department holds seminar to promote navigational safety

As Hong Kong is entering the fog season, the Marine Department held the Navigational Safety Seminar 2014 on January 23 to remind coxswains and persons-in-charge of vessels to post extra lookouts, proceed at a safe speed and strictly comply with the Collision Regulations when navigating in poor visibility in Hong Kong waters.

More than 150 representatives from the shipping industries, as well as coxswains and operators of local vessels, attended the seminar, where safety messages were promoted. Coxswains and crew members were reminded to take adequate safety precautions and prepare contingency arrangements before setting sail. Vessels should have sufficient life-saving appliances. Coxswains and crew members should ensure that vessels, engines and equipment are maintained in conditions that are suitable for navigation. In addition, they should be aware of the contact numbers of the port traffic control unit and units that provide emergency services, and take note of the latest weather conditions and related Marine Department Notices at all times.

On another front, to avoid accidents caused by fatigue, owners and operators of all local vessels must ensure that the duty rosters of crew members, particularly coxswains who are responsible for navigation of vessels, have sufficient rest periods.

As more infrastructure projects are being undertaken in Hong Kong these days, coxswains and crew members were reminded to exercise extra caution when navigating in the vicinity of marine works areas. They should pay attention to the relevant Marine Department Notices, which announce the various stages of these marine works.

Marine Department Notice No. 2 of 2014 on safe navigation in poor visibility has been issued and uploaded to the department's website (www.mardep.gov.hk).

China Maritime Exhibition

China Maritime 2014 was held at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre on February 18 and 19 with more than 200 exhibitors and over 2,000 industry representatives attending.

The exhibition served as an information exchange platform for industry players, where they could find market information and join industry conferences and seminars.

Real-time information of cross-boundary ferry services facilitates trip planning

A new Marine Department website on cross-boundary ferry service is now available for members of the public to get hold of real-time berthing information of Hong Kong-Macao and Hong Kong-Mainland China passenger vessels.

Detailed information of the vessels arriving and departing over the next several hours can be found at the website. This includes their departure/arrival times, destinations and origins, operators, terminals, berths and the status, such as delays and cancellations.

The Marine Department and the operators will remind passengers of the latest arrangements and points to note through the website, especially during inclement weather such as typhoons. This real-time information can help passengers plan their travel.

Members of the public can visit the department's website (<http://crossboundaryferryservices.mardep.gov.hk/en/>) or GovHK (<http://www.gov.hk/en/residents/>) for more details.