

STH heads maritime delegation to Europe

The Secretary for Transport and Housing, Professor Anthony Cheung Bing-leung, led a Hong Kong Maritime Industry Council delegation to Europe on June 1 to promote Hong Kong's maritime services. They attended Posidonia 2014, a large-scale international maritime exhibition in Athens, Greece on June 2 to highlight Hong Kong's advantages in providing high value-added services to the maritime sectors of various countries. Professor Cheung officiated at the opening ceremony of the Hong Kong Pavilion at the exhibition.

Professor Cheung called on the Minister for Shipping, Maritime Affairs and the Aegean, Mr Miltiadis Varvitsiotis on June 3. He left Athens afterwards so as to arrive in Hong Kong on June 4 for attending the Legislative Council sitting to deal with relevant agenda items.

The Under Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Yau Shing-mu, joined the delegation in London, the United Kingdom, on June 4 to meet with officials there and call on maritime organisations. They also attended a seminar to promote Hong Kong's maritime services.

STH responds to 2014 Xinhua-Baltic Exchange International Shipping Centre Development Index Report

Hong Kong ranked third at the 2014 Xinhua-Baltic Exchange International Shipping Centre Development Index Report released in Shanghai on June 26. The Secretary for Transport and Housing, Professor Anthony Cheung Bing-leung, made the following response.

Hong Kong is both a prominent international maritime centre and the leading hub port in the region. Not only is Hong Kong geographically a gateway to southern China, it has also been a launching pad for international shipping companies to extend their business into the fast developing China market.

"With our friendly business environment, a judicial system practising common law and the free flow of capital and information, Hong Kong is often the ideal Asian city to look for different kinds of maritime services for international shipping companies whose business operations involve China or other parts of Asia," said Professor Cheung.

There is at present a maritime cluster of about 700 shipping-related companies operating in Hong Kong, providing a variety of quality maritime services ranging from ship agencies and management, ship finance, maritime law and arbitration services, ship broking, marine insurance to port-related operations.

Professor Cheung added, "Hong Kong has mature and quality maritime services, and is well placed to support Mainland China to develop as a world shipping power. The Central Authorities have clearly indicated support under the National 12th Five-Year Plan for Hong Kong to reinforce and enhance its status as an international maritime centre, and to develop into a high-value goods inventory management and regional distribution centre.

"Looking ahead, we will strive to assume the strategic position of a maritime services and talent hub, as well as becoming the springboard for more maritime companies in the Mainland to enter the international market, and vice versa. We will also provide input to the formulation of the National 13th Five-Year Plan along this direction."

Capitalising on its geographical and institutional advantages, Hong Kong is moving towards high value-added services and a knowledge-based economy, matching up with the rapid economic development in Asia and the global development trend.

According to the recent Consultancy Study on Enhancing Hong Kong's Position as an International Maritime Centre, Hong Kong has advantages in soft power. At the regional level, Hong Kong has the potential to congregate a diversity of high value-added maritime services, including ship registration, management, finance, marine insurance, and maritime law and arbitration, and further become the preferred base in Asia for international maritime business.

To strengthen the institutional set-up and dedicate human resources to drive proactively the industry development, the consultant proposed setting up a new statutory maritime body to propel the long-term development of the maritime industry in Hong Kong, including undertaking policy research, supporting manpower training, and conducting marketing and promotion regionally and internationally. The Transport and Housing Bureau is following up on the recommendation and will study in detail the structure, functions, mode of operation and funding arrangements of the new statutory maritime body. The industry and Legislative Council will be consulted later.

Forum promoting academic-industry collaboration in the maritime field

The Director of Marine, Mr Michael Wong, delivered opening remarks at the Seventh International Forum on Shipping, Ports and Airports (IFSPA) on May 19. He presented the strengths of the port of Hong Kong, as well as the role of the Marine Department.

Speaking at the forum, Mr Wong said Hong Kong is fortunate to have a sheltered natural harbour, which provides good access and a safe haven for vessels calling at the ports from around the world. Moreover, Hong Kong is strategically located on the Far East trade routes and is one of the busiest container ports in the world.

The Marine Department is responsible for administrating the port of Hong Kong and ensuring its safe operation. Its functions include monitoring vessel traffic, coordinating maritime search and rescue, managing designated port facilities and providing navigational aids and hydrographic services to harbour users, he said.

In addition, the Hong Kong Shipping Register, which is administered by the Marine Department, is renowned for its quality. The Hong Kong Shipping Register is now the fourth largest fleet in the world with over 87 million in gross tonnage. These Hong Kong registered ships trade at every corner of the globe.

The IFSPA is an annual international conference jointly organised by the CY Tung International Centre for Maritime Studies and the Department of Logistics and Maritime Studies of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. It invites academics and practitioners to exchange views on issues related to global maritime and aviation and promotes academic-industry collaboration. Over 120 people participated in the forum this year.

Outstanding shipping companies and seafarers honoured

The Marine Department and the Hong Kong Shipowners Association (HKSOA) jointly hosted their luncheon cum award presentation ceremony on April 28. Ship management companies and masters and crew were awarded for their outstanding performance with Hong Kong ships, support of the Hong Kong Shipping Register (HKSR), and bravery on the high seas.

The Under Secretary for the Environment, Ms Christine Loh Kung-wai, was the Guest of Honour and she was invited to present awards to Anglo-Eastern Ship Management Ltd., COSCO (H.K.) Shipping Co. Ltd., Orient Overseas Container Line Ltd., Pacific Basin Shipping (HK) Ltd. and Seaspan Ship Management Ltd, which had outstanding performance in Port State Control inspections.

The Deputy Director of Marine, Mr Tung Hon-ming, presented awards to COSCO (H.K.) Shipping Co. Ltd., which has the most gross tonnage (GT) on the HKSR; and to Hong Kong Ming Wah Shipping Company Limited, which placed the most GT on the HKSR in 2013. Mr Tung also awarded SITC Jakarta Shipping Company Limited for its ship crossing the 85 million

GT mark in the HKSR.

The Chairman of the HKSOA, Mr Kingsley Koo, presented awards to the masters and crews of four Hong Kong-registered vessels for their exemplary actions of bravery to save lives on the high seas. They were *m.v. Aqua Fortune*, *m.v. Ocean Emerald*, *m.v. Yangtse Eternal* and *m.t. Zhuang Yuan Ao*.

Seminar promotes water sport safety

The Marine Department, the Hong Kong Police Force and the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) held the 2014 Safety Afloat Educational Seminar at the Hong Kong Space Museum on June 12 to enhance the public's knowledge of water sport safety.

Speaking at the seminar, the Acting Director of Marine, Mr Tung Hon-ming, reminded water sport participants to take heed of weather conditions or warnings before setting sail. Boat operators should have adequate professional knowledge. They should check the vessel's structure and its safety equipment on board, and familiarise themselves with all the safety precautions and contingency measures, plan their voyages and consider whether the water areas are suitable for the vessel's structure and the activity to be conducted. There should be enough experienced crew members on board to guide and monitor passengers when engaging in water sport activities.

Mr Tung pointed out that pleasure vessels should not enter shallow or dangerous waters, and should navigate slowly in speed-restricted zones or waters with others taking part in water sport activities. He appealed to boat operators and swimmers to take appropriate safety measures to avoid any possible risk if they see other water sport activities nearby.

In order to increase safety awareness, the Marine Department will continue to broadcast Announcements in the Public Interest before the season of water sport activities to promote the importance of safety. Furthermore, officers of the Marine Police and the Marine Department will step up their patrol activities in speed-restricted zones, waters in the vicinity of popular beaches and water sport sites, and will take action against any illegal or reckless boating activities. The LCSD lifeguards will also keep an eye out for boating activities at beaches and the adjacent waters. They will alert officers of the Marine Department and the Marine Police to take law enforcement action against offenders when necessary.

Enhance maritime cooperation among Asia-Pacific region

The Assistant Director of Marine (Port Control), Mr CT Lai, and Senior Marine Officer (Search and Rescue), Mr KW Chan attended the 15th session of the Asia-Pacific Heads of Maritime Safety Agencies (APHoMSA) forum from May 5 to 7 in Fiji.

At the forum, Mr Chan shared Hong Kong experience and challenges in mass rescue operation and exercises. Members agreed to consider stepping up regional coordination to prevent marine accidents and lessen the effects. Members also agreed to review their search and rescue plans, so as to estimate capacities in mass rescue operations.

Improve maritime safety through international collaboration

The Assistant Director of Marine (Multi-lateral Policy), Mr PC So, attended the 93rd session of the Maritime Safety Committee (MSC93) of the International Maritime Organization at its London headquarters from May 14 to 23.

Members of the MSC93 reached consensus on several issues, including approval in principle of the draft Polar Code and related amendments. The Code will be mandatory under the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) and will be formally adopted at MSC94. MSC 93 also agreed amendments to SOLAS Regulation Chapter VI Section 2 related to mandatory verification of the gross mass of a container. These amendments are expected to be adopted at MSC94.

Hong Kong-Macao Regular Marine Safety Meeting

The Director of Marine, Mr Michael Wong, held the regular maritime safety meeting with the Director of Macao Marine and Water Bureau, Ms Wong Soi-man and her delegation on July 3, to strengthen the cooperation on maritime safety between Hong Kong and Macao.

At the meeting, both sides exchanged views and discussed issues, including strengthening communication on marine accidents involving Hong Kong and Macao passenger vessels, navigational safety during the construction of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge, safety of high-speed passenger vessels, and development and upgrading of the Vessel Traffic Systems of Hong Kong and Macao.

Day of Seafarer

To celebrate the Day of the Seafarer, June 25, established by the International Maritime Organization, the Marine Department and the Hong Kong Seamen's Union jointly organised a series of activities, including orienteering race and micro movie competition. It aims to draw public attention to seafarers' contributions and to pay tribute to them. The photo was taken at the orienteering race.