

## **Sail off to explore Harbour Patrol Section**

You might have come across them passing by when sailing at sea – they are the patrol launches of the Harbour Patrol Section (HPS) of Marine Department (MD)! Ever wonder what their missions are? And how does HPS maintain the smooth operation of the port and navigational safety of vessels within Hong Kong waters?

In this issue of Hong Kong Maritime News, the editor is so lucky to explore different working units of HPS under the guide of Kelvin Ng, Assistant Marine Officer (AMO), and join the patrol and inspection work, so as to know more about the routine duties and daily operations of HPS.

### **Roles and responsibilities of HPS**

HPS, under the Operations Branch of the Port Control Division of MD, is mainly responsible for maintaining smooth operation of the port and safety of shipping, enforcing marine legislation, and responding to marine emergencies within Hong Kong waters. Currently, HPS operates 29 patrol launches including 10 launches round-the-clock.

HPS has heavy workload for its daily routines, Kelvin said. Marine Inspectors ride on the patrol launches to carry out different duties every day, including routine patrols in different sectors of Hong Kong waters to ensure fairways are free from obstruction, i.e. no vessel or object will impede the safe passage of vessels; deployment of temporary wreck buoy mark, where necessary, for newly identified navigational hazards and obstruction at sea to alert vessels nearby; provide escort service for hampered vessels, etc ; monitor and regulation of the marine traffic whenever major marine events, marine recreational and sporting events/activities are held.

In addition, Marine Inspectors carry out routine inspection of vessels within Hong Kong waters to ensure compliance with international or local marine regulation and maintenance of safety standards, and enforce prosecution action whenever necessary.

In case of marine emergencies, such as ship fires, collisions, sinking, aircraft crashes, HPS needs to deploy patrol launches to attend to the scene as a commander of marine emergencies when every second counts, to assist in search and rescue

operations and regulate marine traffic at scene.

### **Patrol Area and Launches Distribution**

HPS divided the entire waters of Hong Kong into four patrol sectors (as shown in the diagram). Each sector is served by three to eight patrol launches. Patrol launches may work or patrol across sectors for operational needs upon receiving instructions from the Command Centre or Vessel Traffic Centre (VTC).

### Operation Unit

The HPS also comprises of Operation Unit (OU) which consists of OU(1) and OU(2). Marine Inspectors of OU are responsible for handling complicated cases that require prolonged investigations and follow-up actions and major events/emergencies at sea; organising and conducting special operations, such as anti-speeding, overloading.

### Command Centre

The Command Centre operates round-the-clock throughout the year, and is manned by Senior Assistant Shipping Masters and Marine Inspector IIs. It maintains a continuous listening watch on Very High Frequency and dedicated telephone lines including 1823 to grasp the situation of the port.

The main function of the Command Centre is to arrange and coordinate daily patrols of the port to ensure that all users of the port comply with the local and international marine legislation and regulations. Upon VTC's request, the Command Centre will also deploy patrol launch to provide on-scene reports for the shipping casualty and/or other occurrences within Hong Kong waters.

Apart from the deployment of patrol launches, the Command Centre also handles public inquiries, complaints and reporting of any damages to port facilities to the appropriate sections.

### **Equipment and apparatuses**

Apart from abundant human resources, full- geared and advanced equipment are also indispensable to the work of HPS. HPS checks the speed of vessels with laser

guns to combat speeding. Kenneth Ng, Marine Inspector I under OU, explained to the editor that laser guns emit and receive infrared rays to detect the speed of vessels within specified limit. He added that HPS is planning to acquire new model and more advanced laser guns with video recording and high definition camera functions, which will further enhance the efficiency in executing related duties.

Besides, HPS also takes aerial shots of the marine traffic with drones to assist monitoring the berthing vessels in typhoon shelters. Kenneth shared with the editor that they have to be attentive to the surroundings when operating the drones, where presence of no-fly zones, radars and high-rise buildings may affect transmission of signals. In addition, the weather condition (including strong winds or rain) is one of the factors that may affect the operation of drones.

### **Story of an Assistant Marine Officer – Mission and challenges of joining the Government**

Kelvin gave a clear and comprehensive introduction of HPS to the editor on the interview day, although he just joined MD in January this year as one of the second batch of Assistant Marine Officers. He indicates that his vision has been broadened in only half a year during which he is able to try various kinds of work and challenges.

Having worked for eight years on board, Kelvin used to be a Deck Officer of an ocean-going shipping company. Once joined the Department, he has started having “on-the-job-learning”. Under the supervision of the seniors, he learns to plan and manage daily patrol work, arrange manpower deployment as well as how to enforce the marine legislation. He also assists in handling public enquiries and complaints, and attends meetings of District Councils to learn more about different mechanism and handling procedures. Meanwhile, he has meetings with different government departments including the Marine Police, Customs and Excise Department, Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department and Environmental Protection Department, where he understands the importance of collaboration among relevant counterparts.

Kelvin will take part in the Safety Afloat Educational Seminar 2020 organised by MD in August and will give a presentation on measures to enhance the safety of local vessels during passage of tropical cyclones and the new speed restricted zones. He is working for the seminar and hopes to put across the message to the public about marine safety.

Having joined MD for half a year, Kelvin realises that being a competent officer at the AMO rank, apart from getting familiar with international and local marine legislation, possessing leadership skills and resilience for handling emergency and difficult situations, enthusiasm about the maritime industry is of paramount importance. This enthusiasm and passion are key to motivate himself to learning and continuous improvement. Kelvin believes that he can apply past seafaring experience when dealing with marine incidents and enforcing regulations. Such experience has allowed him to execute his duties efficiently. To cope with the challenges in future, he will spare more time on gaining broader experience in other duties.

Given the ample opportunities to develop his career in MD, Kelvin looks forward to trying different positions and rising to challenges ahead, gearing up to strive for maintaining port and navigational safety of vessels within Hong Kong waters.

### **To serve with dedication and professionalism and fight the virus together**

In view of the COVID-19 epidemic situation in the community, Government departments implemented special work arrangements from January to April in order to reduce social contacts and to minimise the risk of the spread of the disease in the community.

MD, like other Government departments, adjusted to reduce public services, but continue to maintain the provision of emergency and essential public services. MD staff served with dedication and professionalism to maintain navigational safety, as well as to ensure transport of goods and services to Hong Kong unaffected in such

### **Departmental News**

Mr Raymond Sy assumed the post of Deputy Director of Marine (Special Duties) on April 9, succeeding Mr Freely Cheng Kei. Mr Sy provides directorate steer for regular reviews and time-limited projects of the Department.

A joint shoreline cleanup operation was conducted on April 27 by Marine Department (MD), the Environmental Protection Department, the Food and

Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) and volunteers to collect refuse along a rocky beach in Kung Pui Wan, Tap Mun. A total of two tonnes of refuse was collected.

During the operation, FEHD cleaners conveyed the refuse to the MD's collection vessel in batches for transportation to a garbage collection point for centralised handling.

With the support from Hydrographic Office, a video on Tide and Tidal Services from “Cool Met Stuff” series by Hong Kong Observatory was released. Citizens may know more about the causes of ocean tides, and their effects on maritime industry and daily lives.

Video link: <https://youtu.be/8Dol6FeMpuE>

### **Marine knowledge - Meanings of international maritime signal flags**

#### **KILO**

I wish to communicate with you

#### **YANKEE**

I am dragging my anchor

#### **VICTOR**

I require assistance