



The Port

Hong Kong is fortunate in having a sheltered natural harbour, which provides good access and a safe haven for vessels calling at the port from around the world.

The port has always been a key factor in the development and prosperity of Hong Kong, which is strategically located on the Far East trade routes and is in the geographical centre of the now fast-developing Asia-Pacific Basin.

In terms of tonnage of shipping using its facilities, cargo handled and the number of passengers carried, Hong Kong is one of the major ports of the world.

Administration: Responsibility for administering the port is vested in the Director of Marine. The Port Operations Committee advises him on all matters affecting the efficient operations of the port of Hong Kong, except those under the purview of the Pilotage Advisory Committee and the Provisional Local Vessels Advisory Committee. The Hong Kong Port Development Council advises the Government on matters related to port planning and development and promoting Hong Kong as a regional hub port and a leading container port in the world. Meanwhile, the Hong Kong Maritime Industry Council advises the Government on measures to further develop Hong Kong's maritime industry and to promote Hong Kong's position as an international maritime centre. Both councils are chaired by the Secretary for Transport and Housing.

The Marine Department ensures that conditions exist to enable ships to enter the port, work their cargoes and leave as quickly and as safely as possible. It is concerned with many aspects of safety standards for all classes and types of vessels, from the largest container vessels to the smallest passenger-carrying sampans. It also maintains aids to navigation and mooring buoys for sea-going ships, manages three cross-boundary ferry terminals and administers eight public cargo working areas. The Department's website (<http://www.mardep.gov.hk/>) provides a wide range of information on the port and the Hong Kong Shipping Register.

Shipping: Hong Kong continues to flourish as a hub port serving the South Asian Pacific region and acting as an entrepot for the Mainland of China. During 2007, a total of 37 150 sea-going vessels arrived at Hong Kong. In terms of the number of arrivals, there was a decrease of 4.8 per cent from the previous year, while the total net registered tonnage went up by 7.5 per cent.

Hong Kong has a reputation for efficient cargo handling operations. The average turnaround time for container vessels is about 13 hours. For conventional vessels working in mid-stream at buoys or anchorages, it is 45 and 30 hours respectively.

Containerisation: The Kwai Chung and Tsing Yi Container Terminals, located in the north-western part of

the harbour, has nine container terminals with 24 berths of about 7 694 metres of deep water frontage. It covers a total terminal area of about 279 hectares which includes container yards and container freight stations. The nine container terminals has a total handling capacity of over 19 million TEUs which will help maintain Hong Kong as the premier port for Southern China.

Hong Kong handled 24.5 million TEUs (20-foot equivalent units) in 2008, making it one of the world's busiest container ports. Of the total container throughput, some 17.7 million TEUs were handled at Kwai Chung and Tsing Yi Container Terminals, while about 6.8 million TEUs were handled in mid-stream and other wharves.

Ferry Services: The Macau Ferry Terminal in Central, the China Ferry Terminal in Tsim Sha Tsui and Tuen Mun Ferry Terminal in Tuen Mun provide centralised ferry services to Macau and 13 ports in the Mainland. About 100 vessels, mostly high-speed passenger craft such as jetfoils and catamarans and hoverferries, operate from these terminals. In 2008, 23.9 million passengers passed through the terminals, comprising 18.6 million passenger trips to/from Macau and about 5.3 million passenger trips to/from Mainland ports.

Government Fleet: There are over 760 vessels of different types and sizes in the government fleet serving under 14 government departments such as the Marine Police, Customs and Excise, and Fire Services. About 121 vessels are major mechanised vessels. Some user departments operate and man their purpose-built vessels. The Marine Department itself controls about 82 vessels, including patrol launches, personnel carriers, pontoons, self-propelled barges and specialised vessels such as hydrographic survey launches and explosive carriers. These vessels provide support to the department's own port operations or serve other departments which do not have their own fleet.

The Government Dockyard is responsible for the design, procurement and maintenance of all vessels owned by the Government. It occupies a site of 9.8 hectares on Stonecutters Island and has an 8.3-hectare protected water basin as an operational base for vessels operated by the Marine Department. The dockyard has 12 docking covered sheds and over 22 open-yard docking spaces for repair and maintenance of vessels which are supported by a ship-lift system and three ship hoists capable of dry docking vessels of up to 750 tonnes. An on-line computerised information system is employed to co-ordinate the maintenance activities and support services to maximise maintenance efficiency and vessel availability.

Dry Docks and Slipways: There are extensive facilities for repairing, maintaining, dry-docking and slipping of all

types of vessels. Three floating dry docks are located off the west coast of Tsing Yi Island. The largest has a lifting capacity up to 46 000 tonnes. There are also a large number of smaller shipyards, which carry out repairs to vessels and build specialised craft, including sophisticated patrol craft and pleasure vessels for overseas markets.

Port Facilities and Services: The Marine Department operates and maintains 29 mooring buoys for sea-going vessels. Of these 19 are suitable for ships up to 183 metres in length and 10 for ships up to 137 metres. Among all these mooring buoys, 18 of them are special typhoon mooring buoys to which ships can remain secured during tropical cyclones. This improves efficiency and reduces operational costs of vessels through elimination of unnecessary movements.

In addition to the three Immigration and Quarantine Anchorages designated for visiting vessels to complete port formalities, there are eight dangerous goods and thirteen general-purpose anchorages providing temporary berthing spaces for vessels. The areas and water depths of the anchorages are diversified to accommodate different sizes and draughts of ships calling at Hong Kong.

There are over 510 modern marine aids to navigation scattered throughout Hong Kong waters to guide mariners to and from their berths. The aids to navigation are constantly being improved to ensure greater safety. All fairway buoys are lit and fitted with radar reflectors. Traffic Separation Schemes operate in the East Lamma Channel and Tathong Channel.

The Marine Department's VHF radio network provides comprehensive marine communication coverage throughout the harbour and its approaches. The department's Maritime Rescue Co-ordination Centre (MRCC) maintains direct contact with emergency response services, which include the Government Flying Service, Marine Police and Fire Services. MRCC provides 24-hour maritime distress alert monitoring and co-ordinates all maritime search and rescue operations within the Hong Kong search and rescue region in the South China Sea.

A comprehensive Vessel Traffic Service (VTS), with radar surveillance and tracking capabilities as well as a fully integrated data handling sub-system, covers all navigation waters of Hong Kong used by sea-going vessels and ferries. The VTS offers advice on the activities of other vessels and gives navigational information to mariners through a sectorised VHF network. This ensures the safety standard and traffic efficiency of the port. The VTS system can track 4 000 moving vessels plus 1 000 stationary targets in real time. It comprises the latest VTS technology such as AIS, ECDIS, CCTV, new VHF-direction finders and modern communications systems to further improve navigation safety and operation efficiency.

Marine Department patrol launches maintain a watch on shipping, traffic separation schemes, fairways, navigational channels, typhoon shelters and public cargo working areas. They provide on-scene support to the Vessel Traffic Centre (VTC) and are in continuous radio contact with the VTC and local marine traffic control station located at Kwai Chung Container Port. The VTC is thus able to promptly initiate and co-ordinate actions required to facilitate safe navigation in the port.

Dangerous goods are moved in the waters of Hong Kong strictly in accordance with the International Maritime Dangerous Goods Code. Their manifests are recorded in Marine Department's Dangerous Goods Information System.

Fire-fighting vessels operated by the Fire Services Department are kept in a state of readiness at all times. The Marine Department's pollution control vessels are on 24-hour standby to deal with oil spills.

To facilitate transfer of cargo between vessels and the shore, and cargo to and from Pearl River ports, the Marine

Department provides and manages some 6 670 metres of public cargo working sea frontage in various parts of Hong Kong.

Bulk handling facilities for coal and oil are provided at the power generating stations at Tap Shek Kok in Castle Peak and at Po Lo Tsui on Lamma Island.

The Hydrographic Office (HO) of the Marine Department surveys Hong Kong waters and produces nautical charts to facilitate safe navigation within the busy port. It functions with reference to the standards laid down by the International Hydrographic Organisation (IHO). Notices to Mariners are promulgated fortnightly to update the bilingual nautical charts. A Differential Global Positioning System correction signal is broadcast continuously on 289 kHz to assist mariners using GPS navigation to position-fix their vessels more accurately. Tidal stream predictions and real-time tidal information are available on HO's website at <http://www.hydro.gov.hk>.

The Director of Marine is the Pilotage Authority. Pilotage is compulsory for ships of 3 000 gross tonnes and above and gas carriers of any tonnage.

Quarantine and immigration facilities are available on a 24-hour basis. Advance immigration clearance and radio pratique may be obtained by certain vessels on application.

Hong Kong Shipping Register: Hong Kong is a marine centre in Asia. Its mature legal system, open business environment, readily available financial supports and multicultural society are cohering factors that make Hong Kong what it is today.

The establishment of many shipping companies in Hong Kong has its historic reasons. Hong Kong is viewed as the gateway to China. As a result, it is able to attract local and international shipping companies to establish their bases in Hong Kong over the past 166 years.

The Hong Kong Shipping Register (HKSR) also prospers under this strong maritime background. As at December 31, 2008, 1 361 ships have registered under the HKSR with a total of 39.64 million gross tonnes.

The HKSR is an independent shipping register from the mainland. The Special Administrative Region of Hong Kong owns and administers it independently. All maritime policy and administrative decisions are made in Hong Kong.

As a quality shipping register, Hong Kong adopts all major international conventions promulgated by the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) and the International Labour Organisation. The HKSAR Government ensures that the quality standards of ships registered in Hong Kong are maintained to these international conventions while they are flying the Hong Kong flag.

Almost all the certification duties of the Hong Kong registered ships are delegated to nine prominent classification societies recognised by us. As a consequence, a systematic ship quality control system known as the Flag State Quality Control (FSQC) System was developed in 1999 for monitoring and maintaining the quality of ships under the HKSR. The FSQC System is an effective, quality system to monitor ships after they have joined the HKSR. All Port State Control Inspections and incidents related to Hong Kong registered ships and their companies are monitored and recorded in the FSQC System. Any Hong Kong-registered ship whose quality standard appears to be doubtful will be subject to FSQC inspections by Marine Department's surveyors of ships. Recommendations to the possible improvement measures will be made to the ships or the management companies after the inspections to help them to do better in keeping the quality of the ships.

For the assessment of the quality of ships before they join the HKSR, a Pre-Registration Quality Control (PRQC) System was introduced in 2003. All ships to be registered

under the Hong Kong flag are subject to quality assessment prior to their registration. Ships found to have dubious qualities will be inspected by Marine Department surveyors of ships before they are recommended for registration. Only those ships that pass the quality checks are registered.

Hong Kong Local Shipping: About 13 300 vessels are licensed to operate locally and/or in the Pearl River Delta Region. While the Marine Department sets the safety standards for these vessels, the government inspectors and the recognised competent persons/authority are authorised to carry out the safety inspections of these vessels by any one of these parties.

Seafarers: The Mercantile Marine Office registers local seafarers, regulates their employment terms and conditions on board ships of all flags and supervises the employment and discharge of seafarers on Hong Kong ships. Today, Hong Kong has 1 747 Hong Kong officers

and ratings serve on board more than 143 sea-going and river-trade ships of four different marine nations.

Certification of Seafarers: As a party to the STCW Convention, Hong Kong carries out examinations and issue certificates of competencies to seafarers working on Hong Kong registered ships and local vessels. Examinations are held regularly to suit the demand. Certificates of competencies are issued to those candidates who have passed the master, coxswain, deck officer and engineer examinations to operate ships trading locally and internationally.

Licences are also issued to seafarers whose certificates of competencies are issued by countries on the STCW white list to serve on Hong Kong-registered ships.

Marine Industrial Safety: For marine industrial safety, an inspection and advisory service is provided to promote safe working practices in ship repairing, ship breaking, cargo handling on ships and safety afloat.