

Translation

**Local Vessels Advisory Committee**  
**Joint Sub-committee on Class I and Class IV Vessels**  
**Minutes of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting**

Date : 29 November 2012 (Thursday)  
Time : 10:10 a.m.  
Place : Conference Room A, 24/F, Harbour Building, Central

**Present**

Mr. CHAN Cheuk-sang (Chairman)	Marine Department (MD)
Mr. WONG Sai-fat (Chairman)	MD
Mr. KWOK Tak-kee	Hong Kong & Kowloon Motor Boats & Tug Boats Association Ltd. (MBTA)
Mr. WEN Tsz-kit	Hong Kong & Kowloon Motor Boats & Tug Boats Association Ltd. (MBTA)
Mr. NG Siu-yuen, Nelson	Hong Kong & Kowloon Ferry Ltd. (HKKF)
Mr. WONG Ho-yum	Hong Kong & Kowloon Ferry Ltd. (HKKF)
Mr. WU Ka-shun	South China Towing Co. Ltd. (SCT)
Mr. CHEUNG Kwok-wai	New World First Ferry Services Ltd. (First Ferry)
Mr. P. M. LEE, Alfred	New World First Ferry Services Ltd. (First Ferry)
Mr. LI Kin-wah	New World First Ferry Services Ltd. (First Ferry)/ Hong Kong Seamen's Union (HKSU)
Mr. CHOR Yee-on	The Hongkong and Yaumati Ferry Co. Ltd. (HYF)
Mr. Bill CHAN	Discovery Bay Transportation Services Ltd. (DBTPL)
Ms. CHING Ngon-lai	Harbour Transportation Workers General Union (HTWGU)/ Small Craft Workers Union
Mr. FAN Keung	Harbour Transportation Workers General Union (HTWGU)
Mr. Keith MOWSER	Hong Kong Sailing Federation (HKSF)
Mr. Donald LEE	Hong Kong Water Ski Association (HKWSA)
Mr. Roger EASTHAM	Royal Hong Kong Yacht Club (RHKYC)
Mr. CHEUNG Sun-ming	Hebe Haven Yacht Club
Mr. WONG Yiu-wah	Marine Excursion Association (MEA)
Mr. MA Chi-wai	The Hong Kong Shipyard Limited (HK Shipyard)
Mr. CHAN Chi-ming	The Hong Kong Shipyard Limited (HK Shipyard)
Mr. CHEUNG Chi-chuen	Hong Kong & Kowloon Fishermen Association (HKKFA)

Mr. KEUNG Siu-fai	Hong Kong & Kowloon Floating Fishermen Welfare Promotion Association (Floating Fishermen)
Mr. WONG Pak-kin, Ken	Transport Department (TD)
Ms. YAU Lai-sze, Lizzy	Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD)
Mr. CHAN Hon-bun	MD
Mr. SHUEN Chi-keung, Ivan	MD
Mr. CHEUNG Sik-woon	MD
Mr. LAI Ying-keung	MD
Mr. Clement HAU (Secretary)	MD

### **In Attendance**

Mr. CHAN Mang-fu, Jack	Transport and Housing Bureau (THB)
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### **Absent with Apologies**

Mr. LO Ngok-yang	Cheoy Lee Shipyards Limited (Cheoy Lee)
Mr. LAI Hoi-ping	Harbour Transportation Workers General Union (HTWGU)
Mr. CHEUNG Yat-leung, Jacky	Sai Kung Yacht Association
Mr. LEE Shing-hing	Sai Kung Kaito Association
Mr. Albert WU	Gold Coast Yacht and Country Club (Gold Coast)
Mr. Paul CHEUNG	Hong Kong Jet Sports Boating Association (HKJSBA)
Dr. LAU Kwok-lam, Alan	Pleasure Boating Operations
Mr. Alan REID	Hebe Haven Yacht Club
Mr. KWOK Chi-hong	Marine Excursion Association (MEA)
Mr. Chris WONG	Discovery Bay Transportation Services Ltd. (DBTPL)
Mr. CHEUNG Yau-kwong	Fat Tat Hong
Mr. LI Kin-pong, Warren	MD
Mr. WONG Wing-chuen	MD

## **I. Opening Remarks**

**Mr. CHAN Cheuk-sang (MD)** and **Mr. WONG Sai-fat (MD)** welcomed all industry representatives to the meeting.

## **II. Confirmation of Minutes of Previous Meeting**

2. **Mr. WONG Sai-fat (MD)** and **Ms. CHING Ngon-lai (HTWGU)** proposed amendments to the minutes of the previous meeting. The minutes were confirmed after amendment. The Secretary would distribute the amended minutes to all members in due course.

## **III. Discussion Items**

### **1. Marine Traffic Control and Safety Measures**

3. **Mr. CHAN Cheuk-sang (MD)** said that, during the two meetings held with government departments and the industry on 20 November and 27 November respectively, stakeholders had expressed their views and held discussions on marine traffic control and safety measures for major events, as well as on the speeding problem of some departing vessels after the completion of such events. **Mr. CHAN** again expressed gratitude to the industry for its support, and invited **Mr. SHUEN Chi-keung, Ivan (MD)** to report to members the views collected at the two meetings.

4. **Mr. SHUEN Chi-keung, Ivan (MD)** reported that members of the two meetings considered the safety measures for spectator vessels in major events generally adequate, though some of them could be optimised. **Mr. SHUEN** showed members a drawing of Victoria Harbour and explained the optimised new arrangement on the re-opening of the Restricted Area. Under the new arrangement, it would, as usual, take about 30 minutes for fireworks to cool down and the Restricted Area would not be re-opened until after that. During re-opening, the western cordon line would shift eastward at the speed of about 5 knots. Both the western and eastern cordon lines would be removed when the former met or approached the latter, depending on the actual circumstances. The whole process would last for around 20 minutes. Except for the fact that it would take a bit longer for the eastern part of the Restricted Area to be re-opened, the time needed for re-opening the whole Restricted Area would be roughly the same under the new and old arrangements. The new arrangement was expected to reduce the occurrence of head-on situations caused by simultaneous re-opening of the two cordon lines. MD would inform shipping companies of the new arrangement later, and would explain to the industry in detail before major events. As for the problem of speeding discussed in the previous meeting, MD would continue its discussion with the Marine Police so as to work out appropriate countermeasures. On the other hand, MD would step up inspection of vessels during major events and immediately give directions in respect of vessels on which the necessary safety measures were not implemented. Regulation by legislation would also be

contemplated in the long run. As for the crew and passenger lists, MD was seeking the Privacy Commissioner for Personal Data's advice on personal information collection. The new year countdown pyrotechnic display and the Lunar new year fireworks display would soon be held. MD would promote the message of maritime safety to the public through various channels.

5. **Mr. CHEUNG Kwok-wai (First Ferry)** said it was necessary to consider the need of passengers on outlying islands when implementing flow management. The existing dispersal arrangement had caused inconvenience to passengers on outlying islands.

6. **Mr. CHAN Cheuk-sang (MD)** said he understood the industry was concerned about the arrangement on the re-opening of the Restricted Area. He emphasised that the cool-down time of fireworks was not the sole consideration in the timing of its re-opening. Various factors, such as the disembarkation of passengers at landing steps and the dispersal of spectators on land had to be taken into account as well. Stating that premature re-opening of the Restricted Area could be dangerous, he hoped the industry would understand and co-operate with MD. In general, re-opening of the Restricted Area would be delayed when there were accidents. Issues regarding dispersal of passengers would be discussed in TD's working group before major events. **Mr. CHAN** stressed that the time needed for re-opening the Restricted Area would be roughly the same under the new and old arrangements. The re-opening process was planned to start from the west under the new arrangement so that waters in the vicinity of the Outlying Island Ferry Piers could be re-opened as early as possible to enable the passengers leaving the outlying islands to disembark as soon as possible. **Mr. CHAN** said MD would launch a series of measures during major events. In the short term, MD hoped that for passenger carrying vessels, the industry could keep a record of the particulars and number of passengers on board, and children on board would don lifejackets throughout their journey. As a medium-term measure, MD was in discussion with the Department of Justice as to the possibility of requiring that additional requirements be met in the case of specific types of vessels. In the long term, consideration would be given to ensuring compliance with maritime safety measures through legislation. Since a longer period of time would be needed to study these measures, MD looked forward to co-operation and advice from the industry, and would report to members when further details were available. In the future, MD would also enhance law enforcement at sea.

7. **Mr. Roger EASTHAM (RHKYC)** was concerned about the new arrangement on the Restricted Area. He was worried the new arrangement would lead to more vessels using the landing facilities at Causeway Bay Typhoon Shelter. **Mr. EASTHAM** asked if MD would consider implementing traffic control measures there.

8. **Mr. SHUEN Chi-keung, Ivan (MD)** said, given that few vessels had used the landing facilities of Causeway Bay Typhoon Shelter during major events in the past, it was anticipated that the new arrangement would not drastically increase the traffic flow in that area. However, MD would pay attention to the situation and deploy resources accordingly as necessary.

9. **Mr. CHAN Cheuk-sang (MD)** said the effectiveness of the measures would be evaluated after implementation. Since many vessels would not wait for the Restricted Area to be re-opened in the east but would tend to use the landing steps in the eastern waters instead, MD would step up supervision and deploy resources properly.

10. **Mr. WONG Yiu-wah (MEA)** said gradual re-opening of the Restricted Area from the west to the east would be a feasible arrangement.

11. **Mr. CHAN Cheuk-sang (MD)** concluded the discussion and thanked members for their views and comments. He added that MD would continue the discussion on issues concerning the Restricted Area with the Traffic & Transport Arrangements Sub-committee of TB.

## **2. Local Examination Syllabuses and System for Certification**

12. **Mr. WONG Sai-fat (MD)** said members agreed in the previous meeting that it was necessary to enhance the professional competence of coxswains and provide them with continuous learning opportunities. Members generally agreed that the sailing attitude, safety awareness and emergency preparedness of coxswains had to be enhanced. The present meeting would focus on discussing the five areas set out in Paper No. 2/2012.

### **Area 1: Adjusting the proportion of the relevant knowledge in existing examination syllabuses**

13. **Mr. WONG** sought members' views on this aspect. **Mr. WEN Tsz-kit (MBTA)** would like to know at which examination level(s) MD was planning to step up testing of the relevant knowledge.

14. **Mr. WONG Sai-fat (MD)** said the current plan was to step up testing of the relevant knowledge in the examinations for Grade 2 and Grade 3 Certificates.

15. **Mr. NG Siu-yuen, Nelson (HKKF)** hoped MD would notify candidates and training personnel in the industry of such information as course arrangements, notes to candidates and course syllabuses.

16. **Mr. WONG Sai-fat (MD)** responded that the information was set out in the Examination Rules for Local Certificates of Competency and had been uploaded onto MD's website. While the proportion of questions to be asked in examinations would not be given in the rules of examination, he took the views of **Mr. NG Siu-yuen, Nelson (HKKF)** and MD would inform the industry when the plan was to be implemented.

17. **Mr. KEUNG Siu-fai (Floating Fisherman)** would like to know if the industry, having regard to the circumstances of the local trade, might give its views on the examination syllabuses for enhancing maritime safety.

18. **Mr. WONG Sai-fat (MD)** responded that the existing courses were rich in content, and that the Maritime Services Training Institute and representatives of the maritime sector and trade organisations had contributed to the course design process through discussions with MD and provision of assistance in course compilation.

19. As there were no other views on this item in the meeting, **Mr. WONG** concluded that MD would start the work as planned and inform the industry when the plan was to be implemented.

## **Area 2: Provision of short-term maritime course and proof of employment**

20. **Mr. WONG** outlined the current situation first by saying that newly recruited seamen would be eligible for the Coxswain Grade 3 Certificate examination as long as they had one year's relevant work experience and it was not necessary for them to have received any relevant training. However, there was no way to confirm what sort of experience they actually possessed. In view of the foregoing, MD proposed the provision of a short-term maritime course for seamen intending to sit for the Grade 3 Certificate examination. Besides, MD proposed that shipping companies should provide seamen intending to sit for the Grade 3 Certificate examination with proof of employment stating their work experience such as the relevant job items performed and hours of work.

21. **Mr. CHEUNG Kwok-wai (First Ferry)** said he hoped MD would provide information on the number of people applying to sit for the examinations for different classes of certificates and the passing rates. **Mr. CHEUNG** worried that it would be more difficult for the industry to attract new blood with the setting of a higher threshold for

the examination. He proposed that a probationary certification system similar to the probationary driving licence system for vehicles be introduced for the coxswain certificate.

22. **Mr. WONG Sai-fat (MD)** responded that the relevant data could be provided, but the issue of attracting new blood to the maritime industry was beyond the Joint Sub-committee's scope of discussion. **Mr. WONG** stressed that the proposed arrangement would not raise the examination threshold as the requirement of one year's work experience for seamen applying to sit for the Grade 3 Certificate examination remained unchanged. At the moment, the idea of the short-term maritime course was one that would last for a few days, designed to enhance the sailing attitude, safety awareness and emergency preparedness of seamen. As for the teaching staff of the course, consideration could be given to engage retired coxswains as instructors and have instructors' qualifications accredited by MD.

23. **Ms. CHING Ngon-lai (HTWGU)** hoped MD would provide data on people joining the maritime industry each year and expressed concern over the large number of seamen quitting the sector. **Ms. CHING** hoped that the training arrangements could be put into place without delay so that seamen could see the prospects of the industry.

24. **Mr. KEUNG Siu-fai (Floating Fisherman)** said thought might be given to requiring that seamen accumulate sea-going experience and issuing them with a full certificate when they had accumulated sufficient hours of work. **Mr. KEUNG** also encouraged studies on the possibility of allowing seamen to enrol in maritime courses with the use of the Continuing Education Fund.

25. **Mr. CHEUNG Kwok-way (First Ferry)** reiterated that consideration could be given to the introduction of a probationary certification system under which seamen would be issued with a full certificate after they had accumulated sufficient hours of work. **Mr. CHEUNG** expressed concern that young people joining the industry might not be able to accumulate a full year of sea-going experience.

26. **Mr. WONG Sai-fat (MD)** responded that even under the proposed probationary certification system, it would still be necessary for seamen to possess one year's work experience before they could become eligible for the Grade 3 Certificate examination. The introduction of the short-term course aimed at enhancing the sailing attitude, safety awareness and emergency preparedness of seamen.

27. **Ms. CHING Ngon-lai (HTWGU)** did not agree to the introduction of the probationary certification system and remarked that the vessel collision which happened

earlier was not caused by the inexperience of coxswains. **Ms. CHING** pointed out that the current examination system had already presented a great challenge to seamen. Instead of concentrating solely on the discussion of the certification system, MD should keep abreast of the statistics of the industry and plan its development in a wider perspective.

28. **Mr. WONG Sai-fat (MD)** reiterated that the purpose of the short-term maritime course was to enhance seamen's professionalism and that examinations need not be introduced in the course. The one-year work experience requirement for applicants for the Coxswain Grade 3 Certificate would not be changed as a result of the introduction of the course.

29. **Mr. P. M. LEE, Alfred (First Ferry)** agreed with **Ms. CHING Ngon-lai (HTWGU)** that the collision which happened earlier was not caused by the inexperience of coxswains. He hoped that the investigation report would reach an objective conclusion on the incident.

30. **Mr. NG Siu-yuen, Nelson (HKKF)** stated that as the investigation report of the collision had yet to be released, it would not be appropriate to relate the incident to training or pass any judgment on the incident.

31. **Mr. WEN Tsz-kit (MBTA)** remarked that **Mr. WONG Sai-fat (MD)** seemed to have doubts about the existing certification system which had been operating effectively. Given that examiners nowadays were very strict, holders of the Coxswain Grade 3 Certificate should be able to operate vessels not more than 15m in length properly.

32. **Mr. WONG Sai-fat (MD)** responded that, as had been made clear at the previous meeting, MD intended to raise coxswains' professional standards through the present discussion rather than wait for the release of the investigation report before making a decision. The aim of the present discussion on the certification system was not to raise its threshold. Moreover, examiners had not become stricter after the collision incident. **Mr. WONG** stated that MD had no intention to increase the burden of applicants for the Coxswain Grade 3 Certificate. Instead, it hoped that the short-term maritime course could enhance coxswains' professional standards. To his understanding, some shipping companies had already provided refresher courses and talks to their crew.

33. **Mr. KEUNG Siu-fai (Floating Fisherman)** was concerned that the maritime industry had been discredited and that more regulations would be in place due to the collision incident. **Mr. KEUNG** hoped that the scope of discussion could be narrowed to

focus on the certification and training of coxswains operating passenger carrying vessels and high speed craft (rather than fishing or cargo vessels).

34. **Mr. WONG Sai-fat (MD)** responded that the discussion of the Sub-committee was related to Class I and Class IV vessels, which did not include fishing vessels. **Mr. WONG** further said that the short-term maritime course could be held within a seaman's first year in the trade and hence would not increase his burden or require additional hours. He summed up members' views and remarked that MD would prepare new documents for the next meeting to explain the proposed arrangements and the types of vessels affected.

35. **Ms. CHING Ngon-lai (HTWGU)** said that knowledge of safety awareness had already been included in existing maritime courses and hoped that the documents prepared by MD could provide clear information on the short-term course.

36. **Mr. NG Siu-yuen, Nelson (HKKF)** asked members not to talk about the collision incident and requested that discussions about the incident not be included in the minutes. He was worried that such discussions would affect members' perception of the incident.

37. **Mr. WEN Tsz-kit (MBTA)** asked **Mr. CHAN Mang-fu, Jack (THB)** whether the presence of a bureau officer at the meeting meant that the bureau was putting pressure on MD because of the collision incident.

38. **Mr. CHAN Mang-fu, Jack (THB)** responded that the bureau hoped to understand the industry's views better through its representative's attendance at the meeting and said that the collision off Lamma Island had aroused public concern over maritime safety. **Mr. CHAN** added that the Secretary for Transport and Housing had undertaken to conduct an investigation in order to find out and analyse the cause of the accident which resulted in heavy casualties and to formulate measures for the avoidance of similar incidents. **Mr. CHAN** hoped that discussion and collaboration among concerned parties would enable the incident to contribute to maritime safety.

39. **Mr. KWOK Tak-kee (MBTA)** observed that the bureau had not sent any officer to attend previous meetings. Moreover, given that there were relatively few marine accidents as compared to accidents on land, he wondered why this incident had brought up a lot of issues and follow-up work. **Mr. KWOK** pointed out that the Hong Kong waters had always been safe. Class I vessels could even be said to be operating at a safety level that was comparable to the international level. Thus, he hoped that such an isolated incident would not complicate matters and give rise to a multitude of new laws and regulations. The certification requirements were already very demanding after their

revision in 2007 and shipowners were finding it stressful to send their crew to take the examinations. **Mr. KWOK** hoped that members might take their time discussing enhancement of maritime safety rather than aiming for immediate changes.

40. In response, **Mr. WONG Sai-fat (MD)** said that investigation was still ongoing and work related to safety enhancement for the industry should not be incident-driven. **Mr. WONG** once again stressed that there would not be any significant change in the existing examination approach.

41. **Mr. NG Siu-yuen, Nelson (HKKF)** proposed that a certificate course incorporating training in maritime safety be provided to seamen. However, **Mr. NG** considered that the needs of freelance seamen who studied by themselves remained to be met as they might not be able to receive recognised training. Training opportunities should be provided to them as well.

42. **Mr. WONG Sai-fat (MD)** responded that **Mr. NG's** opinions would be considered in the documents prepared for the next meeting.

### **Area 3: Exploring the direction for continuing studies for coxswains**

43. **Mr. WONG Sai-fat (MD)** briefed members by stating that MD suggested requiring coxswains operating passenger carrying vessels to take a few one to two-day refresher courses in every five-year period. A paper on refresher courses would be provided to members for discussion at the next meeting.

### **Area 4: Exploring the requirement of taking practical operation examination**

44. **Mr. WONG Sai-fat (MD)** suggested that coxswains operating passenger carrying vessels and operators of pleasure vessels for hire should be required to take a practical operation examination. Since MD might not have the manpower to cope with the heavy demand, the use of ship simulator might be considered for conducting the practical examination.

45. **Ms. CHING Ngon-lai (HTWGU)** expressed her concern that the use of ship simulator for the practical operation examination would increase costs. The tuition fees for maritime courses were already quite high as subsidies could not be obtained from the Continuing Education Fund. **Ms. CHING** pointed out that it took quite some time for seamen to obtain a Grade 2 Certificate and it was already very difficult for them to pass the Grade 2 examination which included a practical chart work examination. If a candidate

failed in any one part of the Grade 2 examination, he would need to retake the whole examination and the parts he had passed would not be recognised. Since the Grade 2 examination consisted of a number of parts, the whole examination was not easy for seamen.

46. **Mr. WONG Sai-fat (MD)** responded that the practical operation examination would be for the issue of Grade 1 rather than Grade 2 or Grade 3 Certificate. Regarding the issue that the parts passed were not recognised as a result of failure in individual parts of the examination as mentioned by **Ms. CHING**, further discussions could be held between MD and the industry.

47. **Ms. CHING Ngon-lai (HTWGU)** said the practical operation examination would bring out a question: whether a coxswain should pass the examination before attending a shipping company interview, or he should take the examination after securing employment with a shipping company. Moreover, **Ms. CHING** enquired whether candidates who wished to upgrade their Grade 2 Certificate to a Grade 1 Certificate would need to take the examination.

48. **Mr. NG Siu-yuen, Nelson (HKKF)** responded that under such circumstances, a shipping company would not employ a coxswain until he had passed the practical operation examination.

49. **Mr. LAI Ying-keung (MD)** responded that there was currently no practical operation examination but only written and oral examinations for certificate applicants. MD therefore wished to make arrangements for applicants for the Coxswain Grade 1 Certificate to take a practical operation examination.

50. **Ms. CHING Ngon-lai (HTWGU)** said regarding the introduction of a practical operation examination, she needed to collect views from members of the unions first and was not at liberty to give comments at the present stage.

51. **Mr. CHEUNG Kwok-wai (First Ferry)** said the current practice was that newly recruited coxswains would generally be given four to six months, depending on the types of vessel they operated, to adapt to their job. If a coxswain was found incapable of managing the vessel assigned to him after a certain period of time, the shipping company might need to dismiss him so as to ensure that its employees were able to deal with the day-to-day duties assigned to them.

52. **Mr. WONG Sai-fat (MD)**, in response, said he understood that, according to the practice of the industry, coxswains would not be allowed to operate vessels simply because they held certificates but would be trained on a case-by-case basis until the shipping companies had confidence in their ability to operate vessels.

53. **Mr. NG Siu-yuen, Nelson (HKKF)** said practical training would generally be provided for new recruits to afford sufficient training opportunities.

54. **Mr. WONG Yiu-wah (MEA)** said the normal practice of the industry was to assign a suitable type of vessel to a coxswain having regard to his abilities, and to ensure that the coxswain was very conversant with the operation of that particular type of vessel.

55. **Mr. KEUNG Siu-fai (Floating Fishermen)** said the discussion so far indicated that significant changes would be made to the existing examination systems, especially those for the issue of certificates for passenger carrying vessels, and that even coxswains of kaitos would need to take the practical operation examination.

56. **Mr. WONG Sai-fat (MD)** responded that the foregoing discussion was not aimed at altering the nature of certificates. It would not bring any change to the length of vessels that coxswains were currently permitted to operate under their respective certificates.

57. **Ms. CHING Ngon-lai (HTWGU)** expressed her concern that the cost of the new examination would be borne by seamen.

58. **Mr. CHEUNG Kwok-wai (First Ferry)** worried about the problem of manpower shortage in the industry.

59. **Mr. WONG Sai-fat (MD)** responded that the key points of the above discussion would be further elaborated in a paper for discussion by members at the next meeting.

#### **Area 5: Exploring the Need of Type Rating Certificates for Fast Speed Vessels**

60. **Mr. WONG Sai-fat (MD)** said the current definition of high speed craft was formula-based, whereas the definition of fast speed vessels needed examination. **Mr. WONG** suggested that, as a starting point for members' discussion, fast speed vessels be defined as vessels with a speed of 18 knots or above per hour. As regards the Type Rating Certificates, **Mr. WONG** referred to vessels plying between Discovery Bay and Central as examples, saying all coxswains operating those vessels held Type Rating Certificates that were renewed every two years.

61. **Mr. NG Siu-yuen, Nelson (HKKF)** had a query about the definition of fast speed vessels as the 18-knot definition would cover practically all vessels except those run by the Star Ferry. **Mr. NG** would like to know the basis for defining fast speed vessels.

62. **Mr. WONG Sai-fat (MD)** responded that no clear-cut formula was internationally used for defining fast speed vessels. **Mr. WONG** said this item would be raised again for discussion in the papers for the next meeting.

### **3. Working Hours of Coxswains and Crew, and Review of Their Duty Roster System for Local Passenger Carrying Vessels**

63. **Mr. WONG Sai-fat (MD)** asked members if the industry had collected from staff and members views on the issue of working hours discussed at the last meeting.

64. **Mr. CHEUNG Kwok-wai (First Ferry)** responded that staff members were generally agreeable to the “one-day-on and one-day-off” arrangement as they were worried that they would not have sufficient rest, which might endanger passenger safety, if a 12-hour shift system was adopted. From the employers’ point of view, the adoption of a 12-hour shift system would make rostering more difficult as they might not be able to ensure sufficient rest time for staff. **Mr. CHEUNG** said each shipping company had only one berth and that was far from adequate. The tight berthing arrangement also made it impossible for staff to go ashore for a break in the time slot between sailings.

65. **Ms. CHING Ngon-lai (HTWGU)** responded that she had yet to discuss the issue with members of the unions in detail, but she remarked that in 2009 to 2010, the adoption of a 12-hour shift system was proposed by certain shipping companies and was then opposed by seamen. **Ms. CHING** hoped that staff could be given rest time under the “one-day-on and one-day-off” arrangement, particularly on busy days or during public holidays.

66. **Mr. WONG Sai-fat (MD)** said reference had been made to the situations in Taiwan and Singapore. Under the employment law of Singapore, seamen could not work over 12 hours a day and should be allowed a break of no less than 45 minutes in every period of no more than 6 hours. As for Hong Kong, the length of rest time and lunch break for seamen were issues that called for consideration at the moment. **Mr. WONG** hoped members could give their views on those issues in the meeting.

67. **Ms. CHING Ngon-lai (HTWGU)** replied that she had already submitted the views collected to the Director of Marine. Members of the public would like to know if

changes in the working hours of crew would affect passenger safety. The unions were concerned with the discussion on standard working hours and the length of rest time for crew, and hoped to ease the pressure of crew when they moved from one vessel to another for work.

68. **Mr. WEN Tsz-kit (MBTA)** said the cases of bus drivers and coxswains were different. Bus drivers needed to keep paying attention to road conditions for a long period of time, while coxswains did not necessarily have to stay focused at all times while on board.

69. **Mr. NG Siu-yuen, Nelson (HKKF)** said the above discussion overlapped with that on standard working hours, and no conclusion could be drawn at the present stage.

70. **Ms. CHING Ngon-lai (HTWGU)** said the cases of coxswains and bus drivers were similar. Both needed to concentrate well while working.

71. **Mr. CHEUNG Kwok-wai (First Ferry)** said professional drivers faced immense pressure because of generally poor road conditions and the poor driving attitude of some motorists. The case was different on the sea, since coxswains faced less pressure in certain waters. However, bus companies were generally able to arrange rest time for drivers, while coxswains could not take a rest until they had reached their destination.

72. **Mr. WONG Pak-kin, Ken (TD)** said, as far as he understood, the Sub-committee was a forum for the discussion of matters concerning maritime safety and operation. He hoped members would discuss the relevant items from these perspectives to keep the discussion focused.

73. **Ms. CHING Ngon-lai (HTWGU)** said the working hours of crew and maritime safety were related to each other. **Ms. CHING** said it was necessary to ensure the working conditions of coxswains and crew were reasonable.

74. **Mr. WONG Sai-fat (MD)** remarked that the issue under discussion was not standard working hours but maritime safety and the working time arrangements for crew, and that it was inappropriate to compare the case of crew with that of bus drivers. He said members should discuss the sailing arrangement to ensure that the crew had adequate rest and their health was taken care of, and that a benchmark agreed by the industry would be set. The current practice of the industry was that once extra services were required, the sailing schedules might be bypassed. Therefore, the purpose of the present discussion was

to explore ways for shipping companies to keep to their sailing schedules even when extra services were required.

75. **Mr. NG Siu-yuen, Nelson (HKKF)** said the media had misunderstandings about the operation of the industry, since providing extra services did not mean a shipping company would request that a vessel take passengers immediately after berthing. In fact, providing extra services meant the shipping company needed to deploy additional vessels and crew for the extra services.

76. **Mr. WONG Pak-kin, Ken (TD)** said the regular and stand-by vessels used for providing licensed ferry services were given in the service details issued by TD. In the event of high patronage, licensed ferry operators could, without affecting the regular sailings, provide extra services by deploying stand-by vessels to meet the demand.

#### **IV. Details of the next meeting**

77. The next meeting would be held on Friday, 28 December 2012 at 2:30 p.m., in Conference Room A, 24/F, Harbour Building.

#### **V. End of meeting**

78. There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:25 p.m.