

Government proposes amendments to update regulations on merchant shipping and merchant shipping seafarers for compliance with international standards

The Government gazetted today (February 23) to propose legislative amendments to five regulations under the Merchant Shipping (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Ordinance (Cap. 413) and the Merchant Shipping (Seafarers) Ordinance (Cap. 478) to incorporate into local legislation the latest relevant requirements of the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, 1973, of the International Maritime Organization and the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, of the International Labour Organization.

The five regulations to be amended are the Merchant Shipping (Prevention of Pollution by Garbage) Regulation (Cap. 413O), the Merchant Shipping (Prevention of Air Pollution) Regulation (Cap. 413P), the Merchant Shipping (Seafarers) (Health and Safety: General Duties) Regulation (Cap. 478C), the Merchant Shipping (Seafarers) (Returns of Births, Deaths and Missing Persons) Regulation (Cap. 478F), and the Merchant Shipping (Seafarers) (Working and Living Conditions) Regulation (Cap. 478AF).

The proposed amendments include new requirements related to the Garbage Record Book, designation of a new emission control area for sulphur oxides and particulate matter, and welfare of seafarers, including seafarer recruitment and placement agents, provision of drinking water and balanced meals, delivery of the bodies or ashes of deceased seafarers and reporting of relevant fatality data, as well as provision of appropriately sized personal protective equipment.

A spokesman for the Transport and Logistics Bureau said, "As a major member of the international maritime community, Hong Kong has been a staunch supporter of marine environmental protection and enhancement of seafarers' welfare. The proposed legislative amendments demonstrate our continual commitment in these aspects, which are crucial for the creation of a favourable environment for maritime activities in line with the relevant international standards."

The Panel on Economic Development of the Legislative Council, as well as the Hong Kong Fleet Operation Advisory Committee, the Local Vessels Advisory Committee and the Seafarers' Advisory Board of the Marine Department, have been consulted on the legislative proposal. Members supported the proposal.

The proposed legislative amendments will be tabled at the Legislative Council on February 28 for negative vetting.