

Hong Kong shipowners call for a statutory body to guide industry

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Independent maritime authority with ample resources needed to deal with rising competition in Asia



A DEDICATED POLICY BUREAU IS NEEDED TO DRIVE THE SECTOR'S LONG-TERM STRATEGY, SAYS THE HONG KONG SHIPOWNERS ASSOCIATION.

THE Hong Kong Shipowners Association is lobbying the city's government to set up an independent statutory body to head up maritime affairs in the special administrative region and to boost its status as a global maritime centre.

Although the existing Maritime and Port Board has addressed some issues in the maritime industry, the association thinks a statutory body that works closely with the sector to tweak policies and develop new initiatives to improve competitiveness would be more appropriate, said new chairman Jack Hsu in a statement at the association's 60th anniversary event.

He noted that members also supported the formation of a dedicated policy bureau with the means to spearhead long-term initiatives for the maritime, aviation, ports and logistics industries.

One recommendation Mr Hsu gave was to split the transport and housing divisions of the city's current Transport and Housing Bureau and establish a separate office in charge of all road, air and sea transport issues.

"Hong Kong's shipping industry has made remarkable achievements," said former HKSOA chairman Sabrina Chao.

She said the total tonnages of vessels owned or managed by Hong Kong shipowners accounted for about 10% of the world's total.

In 2015, there were over 13,800 people engaged in the city's maritime industry, including ship agents and managers, shipowners and operators and ship brokers.

"I believe that our maritime industry will scale new heights, as long as we take good advantage of the opportunities arising from national policies like the Belt and Road initiative, and continue to bring Hong Kong's competitive advantages into play," she added.

In October, Hong Kong's transport and housing bureau [proposed changes to the size of the territory's merchant shipping ordinance](#) covering shipowners' liability as it seeks to incorporate into legislation the International Maritime Organization's convention on limitation of liability for maritime claims.

The Maritime & Port Authority of Singapore, which represents Hong Kong's closest competitor in the region, plays the roles of port authority, port regulator, port planner and national maritime representative, among other things.