

Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao joint maritime search and rescue exercise conducted smoothly (with photos)

The Marine Department (MD), in collaboration with the search and rescue (SAR) agencies in Guangdong and Macao as well as several Hong Kong government departments, including the Guangdong Rescue Co-ordination Centre, the Macao Marine and Water Bureau, the Macao Customs, the Hong Kong Police Force, the Government Flying Service, the Fire Services Department and the Civil Aid Service, smoothly conducted a joint maritime SAR exercise in the waters off Ha Mei Wan, Lamma Island, today (June 11).

A spokesman for the MD said, "The objective of the SAR exercise is to test the communication efficiency, co-ordination capabilities and resource deployment among the SAR agencies in Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao. The exercise also aims to strengthen co-operation between Hong Kong and neighbouring regional SAR centres to enhance their response capabilities in the event of future major maritime emergency incidents."

The exercise simulated a collision between a cross-boundary high-speed passenger ferry carrying around 70 passengers from Macao to Hong Kong and a local oil tanker in the waters north of Shek Kwu Chau. The accident caused damage to the ferry's hull; two passengers on board went missing after falling overboard, and many passengers were injured. Following the collision accident, the local oil tanker caught fire, trapping a seriously injured crew member in the engine room.

Under the co-ordination of the MD's Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre, the participating SAR units took various contingency measures to carry out SAR operations. These operations included traffic regulation in the surrounding area to ensure safety at the scene to search for and rescue the missing persons who had fallen into the sea, extinguishing the fire on board the oil tanker, providing on-the-spot first aid to the injured, and deploying a helicopter to transfer the seriously injured to hospital for treatment. The exercise lasted about three hours, mobilising 17 SAR vessels, a helicopter and a total of more than 230 people.

The MD regularly conducts exercises with various SAR units and maritime stakeholders to strengthen co-operation with SAR centres in neighbouring areas and provide effective and rapid SAR services.

