

Gov't meeting addresses Covid crisis

Kaiji Shinko Renmei ad hoc gathering hears about state of maritime industry

Maritime organization reps make requests; JSU President Morita asks Diet members to provide vaccines to seafarers soon, introduce smoother crew rotations, to continue support in maintaining seafarer employment

On May 11, 2021, Kaiji Shinko Renmei convened an ad hoc meeting at the First Members' Office Building of the House of Representatives to hear on the current state of the maritime industry under the Covid-19 pandemic. On behalf of the All Japan Seamen's Union (JSU), President Yasumi Morita participated in the meeting with a briefing on how seafarers are doing in the grips of the pandemic and asking for early vaccine inoculations and smoother crew rotations.

The ad hoc meeting was attended by approximately 170 individuals, including some 100 lawmakers from the upper and lower houses. Others represented 11 organizations concerned with maritime affairs, such as the JSU, the Japanese Shipowners' Association, the Japan Federation of Coastal Shipping Associations and the Japan Passengerboat Association. Also present were officials from seven relevant governmental agencies, such as the ministries of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism; Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW); and Justice. After Mr. Seishiro Eto, chairman of Kaiji Shinko Renmei, which is an association of Diet members who promote maritime affairs, gave an address, and the leaders of the attending industry organizations made requests, respectively.

At the beginning of the meeting, Mr. Morita commented on the passage of a bill to amend the national referendum law by the lower house's Research Commission on the Constitution. He showed his appreciation, as the law's amendment would cast an eye on the particularity of seafarers who work at sea. More specifically, the president was grateful to those who had endeavored to arrange new environments, because a revised national referendum law will allow crewmembers on duty on board



Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga (fourth from right) receives the resolution from Kaiji Shinko Renmei Chairman Seishiro Eto (third from right). Photo shows (from left) JSU President Yasumi Morita, Shipbuilders' Association of Japan Chairman Tamotsu Saito, Kaiji Shinko Renmei Vice-Chairman and Director-General Ryu Shionoya, Japan Federation of Coastal Shipping Associations Chairman Kokichi Kuribayashi, Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, Kaiji Shinko Renmei Chairman Seishiro Eto, Japanese Shipowners' Association Vice-President Takashi Nakashima and Japan Passengerboat Association Vice-Chairman Takuji Kato.

flag-of-convenience ships and vessels carrying two or fewer Japanese seafarers as well as students receiving on-board on-the-job training to cast their ballots. Having done so, he also made requests on 1) the early administration of Covid-19 vaccines to seamen, 2) the rotation of crewmembers, and 3) the continuation of support to maintain employment.

Early inoculation of Covid-19 vaccines to seafarers

Demanding the early inoculation of Covid-19 vaccines to seafarers, President Morita explained that when on duty on board vessels, they have no way of immediately receiving proper treatment even if they are infected. Having said so, he introduced a joint statement made on March 25 by the International Maritime Organization, the International Labour Organization, the World Health Organization and others to ask for the early administration of vaccine shots to seafarers. To ensure that society will continue to work, the statement suggested that seamen and aircraft crewmembers join medical workers so that they will also be eligible to receive vaccine jabs on a priority basis.

Rotation of crewmembers

As for the rotation of crewmembers, President Morita stated that thanks to efforts by Japanese shipping companies and other relevant parties, the number of mariners working for long periods of time on board ships of the Japanese commercial fleet is on the decline. Japanese and

other crewmembers can now get on and off vessels early when shipping routes are temporarily changed or when their vessels call ports where they can do so, for example, he said. The JSU leader added that nevertheless many non-Japanese seamen are still forced to stay considerable lengths of time on board ships. Mr. Morita also introduced steps taken in the international community, such as a resolution made in December 2020 by the United Nations General Assembly and one made by the ILO's International Labour Office. Depending upon future coronavirus infection developments, he was concerned that it could be more difficult to rotate seafarers. As such, he demanded that measures be taken to realize the smoother rotation of not only Japanese crewmembers, but also those coming to Japan from overseas to take logistics responsibility.

Continuation of support to maintain seafarer employment

In the Japanese shipping sector, which covers domestic cargo and passenger transport as well as ferry operations, the volume of shipments and number of passengers are both decreasing sharply due to the pandemic, placing the sector in a severe situation, according to Mr. Morita, who called for the continuation of support needed to maintain seafarer employment.

Kanji Shinko Renmei adopts resolution, to submit it to PM, other ministers

To meet demand from various or-

ganizations, relevant governmental authorities spoke of policies needed for the maritime industry under the Covid-19 crisis, the current state of virus infections, the prevention measures taken at seaports and airports, relevant budgets and financial assistance. The MHLW said that Japan's vaccine rollout is being advanced in accordance with a sequence of medical workers, elderly citizens, those with underlying medical conditions and working at elderly facilities and so on. The health ministry added that Tokyo will proceed with a program to let those from the maritime industry get vaccine shots as soon as possible. In respect to the provision of the employment adjustment subsidies in and after July, which are scheduled to come to an end at the end of June, the ministry said that it will make an appropriate decision when looking at employment climates.

During the meeting, members of Kaiji Shinko Renmei asked questions on relevant subjects. Many of them agreed with and indicated they will underpin the requests made by the industry organizations, including those for the early administration of Covid-19 vaccines to seamen and the continuation of the employment adjustment subsidies in and after July.

Opinions from lawmakers

"With the issue of rotating crewmembers, not only oceangoing shipping, but deep-sea tuna and bonito fishing are also struggling

to cope. We need to strongly raise our voices."

"Seamen cannot always have medical treatment when on duty at sea. To involve the MLIT's Maritime Bureau and make special arrangements to inoculate vaccines to seafarers, it is necessary to consider giving them a status to indicate they are crucial for Japan's welfare."

"Passenger ships are an inevitable mean of transport for the nation. To keep clusters of Covid cases from occurring, vaccine administrations should not be held off for relevant parties including crewmembers. They should be treated appropriately."

"Concerning vaccine inoculations for seamen, I hope that necessary procedures will be completed as soon as possible."

"It is widely agreed the employment adjustment subsidies will be extended and that it is necessary to give vaccine shots as soon as possible. To this end, bipartisan actions need to be taken."

"Nothing is more important than protecting industry and employment. If asked to make an appropriate judgment on the employment adjustment subsidies, I would say that an extension is the only option."

Having exchanged such opinions, the ad hoc meeting adopted a resolution that reflects requests from various organizations. After agreeing to immediately submit it to the prime and other ministers in charge, the meeting came to an end.

Kaiji Shinko Renmei adopts resolution on Covid-19

To help restore maritime industry; JSU head Morita joins heavyweights

Kaiji Shinko Renmei demands actions taken for seafarers working hard as usual under COVID-19 crisis to maintain stable maritime transport to/from Japan, supply edible fishery products, fulfill other important tasks

Resolution presented in sequence to Chief Cabinet Secretary Katsunobu Kato, MHLW Minister Norihisa Tamura on May 17; MLIT Minister Kazuyoshi Akaba on May 18; Deputy PM/MOF Minister Taro Aso on May 20

On May 13, 2021, executives of Kaiji Shinko Renmei, which consists of Diet members from different political parties and representatives from maritime organizations, visited the Japanese Prime Minister's Office to present a resolution directly to Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga.

The Kaiji Shinko Renmei resolution comprises six requests agreed upon earlier at an ad hoc meeting of the association to overcome the coronavirus pandemic and reinvigorate the maritime industry. Prime Minister Suga accepted the resolution from Mr. Seishiro Eto, president of Kaiji Shinko Renmei (a Liberal Democratic Party member of the House of Representatives and an honorary political advisor to the All-Japan Seamen's Union); Mr. Ryu Shionoya, vice-president of Kaiji Shinko Renmei (another LDP lower house member); and leaders from five maritime-related organizations. The JSU was represented by President Yasumi

Morita, one of the heavyweights from major maritime affairs entities present. President Morita asked Prime Minister Suga to take actions for the seafarers who continue to work hard in the midst of the Covid-19 crisis to maintain stable maritime transport to and from Japan, supply edible fishery products and fulfill other important tasks. More specifically, the JSU leader demanded that 1) seafarers receive coronavirus vaccines immediately, 2) that the issue of crew rotations be addressed, and 3) that necessary support be continued to maintain employment.

Having received the resolution, Prime Minister Suga affirmed that the maritime industry is one of Japan's key industry and indicated that he will strive to live up to the requests.

After meeting with the prime minister, the Kaiji Shinko Renmei delegation made requests in accordance with its resolution successively with relevant Cabinet ministers. The delegation submitted the resolution to Chief Cabinet Secretary Katsunobu Kato and



The ad hoc meeting of Kaiji Shinko Renmei.

Health, Labour and Welfare Minister Norihisa Tamura on May 17; Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism Minister Kazuyoshi Akaba on May 18; and Deputy Prime and Finance Minister Taro Aso on May 20. On behalf of the JSU, President Morita strongly demanded that measures be taken for the seafarers.

Details of resolution

1) Due to a spike in coronavirus infections, the maritime industry is in an extremely severe business condition. To maintain the employment of seafarers, who are essential workers, and those working in shipbuilding, at ports and harbors and in warehousing services, we will strive to extend the special measures of the employment adjustment subsidies to make them available in and after July. We will also work to enhance measures to provide financing necessary for maintaining business operations.

2) To help the business conditions of the shipbuilding and ship machinery and equipment industries pick up soon, in particular, we will endeavor to enrich budgets to promote the construction of more public-sector vessels; stimulate the introduction of ships meeting future demand, such as LNG-powered and other eco-friendly ships; and develop new shipbuilding markets for offshore wind power generation and others.

3) We will work to have a bill to partially amend the Marine Transportation Act and other statutes to reinforce the foundation of the maritime industry passed and legislated soon. It would underpin regional economy and employment as well as enhance the international competitiveness of the maritime industry, which is a foundation of the people of Japan's lives and economic activities.

4) We will make efforts to get vaccine inoculations to seafarers, who remain on duty as essential workers, realized immediately in consideration of their working patterns.

5) As for the getting the rota-

tion of crews, we will take actions to do it smoothly not only for Japanese crewmembers, but also for foreigners who come to and from Japan to engage in logistics.

6) As it concerns the Joint Ownership Shipbuilding Scheme by the Japan Railway Construction, Transport and Technology Agency (JRJT), from which financial and technical support can both be available for the construction of high-quality, advanced newbuildings, support must be enhanced for, for example, conducting reviews according to requests from shipowners.

Other objectives included the promotion of building replacements for domestic-trade ships.



Opening remarks made by Kaiji Shinko Renmei Chairman Seishiro Eto.



JSU President Yasumi Morita speaks at the meeting.

VOICES from SEAFARERS

**Signing off crew of MV SPRING LIBERTY**

On this critical conditions of pandemic, we were required to go to the government designated quarantine facility. Thanks to our beloved company and to the authorities who had facilitated our repatriation. We are hoping each of every seafarers should receive a vaccine before joining a vessel.

**Officer and crew of MV MELODIA**

Everybody are caught in between a harsh condition where in every man hope for a healthy and safety surroundings. We are hoping some vaccinations of tough kind to prevent us getting infected by contagious diseases in every port. Thanks in advance.

**.Officers and crew of MV MOL EXPERIENCE**

Exercise has a great deal in boosting the immune system. Even with or without an outbreak of pandemic, we need to sturdy our immune system to thwart the extent of any infections. Please always be safe everyone.

**Signing off crew of MV HSL PERTH**

Signing off is a norm of every ship when seafarers had reached their end of contracts. Though there is a pandemic, the disembarking crew are extending their appreciation to the authorities who had arranged this earnest repatriation likely possible. Thank you.

**Officers and crew of MV SAMMY**

Labor day is a distinct occasion in commemorating the role and contributions of every workers /seafarers to the world's economy. As an honor of our safety and protection against the current corona virus, a well-founded vaccination should be administered to us.

**Crew members of MV HORAI BRIDGE**

Working together has an influence in lessening the load of our contracts and sometimes relieve anxiety from covid-19. To our fellow seafarers and friends, may we ask you to maintain your health protocols in preventing the spread of corona virus.

ICS releases vaccination roadmap to quicken jab rollout

As the United States, Netherlands and other nations begin to roll out vaccines to all seafarers, the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) has today published a vaccination roadmap framework to help establish vaccination hubs dedicated to seafarers across the world, alongside other major maritime NGOs.

To date, 16 states in the U.S. have begun vaccination programs for nonnative crew delivering goods in their ports. Other European countries are set to follow suit in the coming weeks and months due to successful vaccinations programs for their own population, including the Netherlands which will launch a vaccination program for all seafarers, regardless of nationality, sailing under the Dutch flag from mid-June.

To help governments and companies responsible for creating hubs, the 21-page document has information on vaccine eligibility, implementation, distribution, administration and legal issues.

Seafarers are a unique population with their own requirements for international travel. To pro-

tect the health of seafarers, passengers and the general public, and to minimize disruptions to trade and global supply chains, vaccination of seafarers is essential.

Guy Platten, secretary-general of the International Chamber of Shipping, commented:

"The pace of Covid-19 vaccine production is a modern marvel, but the world is reeling over distribution delays. Soon, seafarers will be delivering the vaccine by sea freight. Already they deliver critical PPE, safety boxes, syringes, and other medical materials for the vaccine rollout. Seafarers must be prioritised for the vaccine to not further exacerbate delivery delays."

While industry bodies are working with authorities at a national, regional and international level to prioritize rapid access to vaccinations for seafarers, a roadmap dedicated to seafarer vaccination will help to achieve global immunization.

The document can be used by shipping companies (their agents and representatives, including crew agencies), maritime administrations and national health authorities, in liaison with other authorities (such as local cus-

tom, immigration, border control, seaport and civil aviation) and seafarers, during the planning and roll-out stages of the vaccination program.

The roadmap allows governments, regions and companies responsible for port authorities to expedite putting procedures in place to create vaccine hubs, once they are ready to begin vaccine rollout to seafarers. Port authorities will work in collaboration with other stakeholders, including shipowners, charities and medical staff to ensure effective vaccine implementation.

These learnings can be translated and replicated globally when other countries are in the position to do the same. The roadmap will allow countries to do so quickly, by allowing governments, companies and other stakeholders to learn from the best practice of others.

Eligibility

The vaccination program will be targeted at seafarers who:

- need to leave their vessels and return home;
- emanate from countries which currently do not have vac-

ination available (roughly 60% of the seafaring population);

- emanate from countries which currently have not prioritized seafarers in their vaccination campaigns.

Types of vaccination

With over 50 vaccines in clinical trials, it is recommended that the vaccination administered should be on the World Health Organization (WHO) list of vaccines. Due to the transient profile of international seafarers, single dose vaccines are strongly preferred under this roadmap.

However, it is recognized that these may not always be available in certain countries. Should a second dose be needed, plans should be developed for the second injection to be received in a timely manner.

Implementing the roadmap

National and local authorities, ships and seafarers and welfare providers should contribute to forming a multidisciplinary team. This will be required to establish-and implement a seafarer vaccination roadmap, from establishing a center to rolling

out the program.

Establishing a vaccination site

Sites for vaccination hubs will be chosen based on their efficient crew access, plentiful vaccine supply and appropriate infrastructure support to supply and store vaccines. A site could be a port or an airport, or in existing medical facilities that are already used as a vaccination center.

Legal and liability considerations

Vaccination requires an individual's informed and voluntary consent. If an employed seafarer refuses vaccination, employers should consider the reasons given carefully. Employers may consider not allowing unvaccinated employees to work. Each case will need to be considered on its own facts and an individual response made accordingly.

Due to the complexity of legal issues involved in vaccination of seafarers, it is suggested that interested stakeholders review the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) guidance on the subject. (Source: ICS)

Bad diet makes seafarers less productive

Unhealthy eating can cut productivity levels among seafarers by 20%, highlighting the need for shipping companies to hire a catering management provider that specializes in preparing and serving nutritious food.

Christian Ioannou, Managing Director of MCTC, the leading international catering management and training provider, believes this startling statistic from the World Health Organization must be taken seriously by vessel owners, managers and operators around the world.

“Studies from recent years show that what you eat has a direct im-

act on your work performance,” he said. “Energy comes from glucose, which can be found in almost everything we eat. However, the rate at which our bodies convert food into glucose—which our brains need to keep us alert—is dependent on what we consume.”

Foods such as bread, pasta and cereal release glucose quickly, causing a spike and then slump in energy. High-fat meals involving cheeseburgers and French fries provide more sustained energy, but the body has to work harder to break them down – reducing oxygen levels in the brain and making someone feel groggy.

“Vitamins and minerals affect

our mental and physical health,” said Nichole Stylianou, Nutritionist at MCTC. “Food provides the body with essential nutrients, which can only be obtained directly from diet. For example, Vitamin C lowers cortisol levels, which is a stress hormone, while complex carbohydrates increase the production of serotonin, commonly known as the happiness chemical.”

Sven Schröder, Business Development Director at MCTC, said a balanced, nutritious diet would give seafarers the energy they needed to work safely and efficiently. “The best way to provide that is to outsource to a catering management company that understands

how eating the right foods can have a positive impact on someone’s productivity,” he added.

MCTC offers a full Catering Management Program covering a vessel’s entire catering management needs such as ordering supplies, recipe planning, menu management, health and nutrition – all of which reduce vessel running costs. It also provides a Catering Competency Development Program, designed to increase standards in the galley through a safe food handling and nutrition course; onshore upgrading culinary course; trade tests; briefings; onboard visits and crew conferences. (Source: MCTC)

Shipping to fall short of NZE

The maritime shipping industry will fall short of achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions (NZE) by 2050, the International Energy Agency (IEA) said in a report.

The shipping industry is expected to miss its net zero carbon dioxide (CO₂) target “due to a lack of available low-carbon options on the market and the long lifetime of vessels (typically 25 to 35 years)”, the IEA in a report on Tuesday.

This comes despite a growing stream of pledges and commitments from policymakers and industry stakeholders to achieve zero emissions by 2050 in the global shipping industry.

The IEA now expects emissions from the maritime shipping industry, which was responsible for about 880 million tons of CO₂ emissions in 2019 and 830 million tonnes in the following year, to decline by 6% annually to 120 million tons of CO₂ in 2050.

About 90% of world trade is transported by sea, and the UN shipping agency—the International Maritime Organization (IMO)—aims to reduce overall greenhouse gas emissions by 50% from 2008 levels by 2050.

In the short-term, considerable emission reductions in shipping are possible through operational efficiencies such as reduced voyage speeds and wind assistance while in the medium-term, low-carbon fuels such as biofuels, hydrogen and ammonia will play a significant role, according to the IEA.

“Ammonia and hydrogen are the main low-carbon fuels for shipping adopted over the next three decades in the NZE, their combined share of total energy consumption in shipping reaching around 60% in 2050,” said the IEA.

Biofuels are expected to provide almost 20% of total shipping energy needs in 2050 while electrification will play a “very minor role”, it said. (Source: Reuters, reporting by Roslan Khasawneh; editing by Emelia Sithole-Matarise)

Europe still open to seafarers to join their vessels

Seafarers around the world can still travel to Europe to join vessels—even from countries facing fresh Covid-19 outbreaks such as India, where daily cases hit more than 300,000 in mid-May.

“Getting seafarers into or out of Europe isn’t a problem at the moment,” said Peter Smit, Co-CEO of Boers Crew Services, the Netherlands-based shipping crew transport services operator for Northern Europe.

“If a seafarer flies from, say, Manila into Amsterdam, we can get them to the port for a crew change. They will, of course, need to be tested for Covid-19 and most likely be quarantined in a hotel. But if the test result comes back negative, it’s no problem for them to join the vessel.”

Mr. Smit, whose company helps transport shipping crewmembers to and from ports in The Netherlands, Belgium and Germany, added that the same process applies to seafarers who want to fly out of Europe after leaving their ship. “It’s almost the same procedure, only a quarantined stay in a hotel isn’t, in most cases, necessary.”

While getting seafarers into Europe remains relatively straightforward, carrying out crew changes is proving more difficult, according to Mr. Smit.

“We haven’t had to change much in terms of how we operate, but it is definitely more complicated to arrange a crew change in Europe, because of the rules put in place by immigration and health authorities,” he said.

“Seafarers from most non-Schengen areas need a Schengen visa, but with some of the embassies closed because of Covid-19, we can arrange visas on arrival when entering Europe.” (Source: Boers Crew Services)

ICS record book to track ships’ cooks training

Ships’ cooks have a unique role on board a vessel and it is widely known that a well fed crew is essential to the effective running of a ship. Ensuring every ship has a properly trained and experienced cook on board is vital. To support both employers and ships’ cooks, the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) has produced a brand new record book to enable ships’ cooks to track their career progression and communicate their expertise and experience to employers and colleagues. This is the first global resource to help cooks on board demonstrate competency and record their training and experience as they develop their careers at sea.

The new Training Record Book for Ships’ Cooks can be used by an individual to demonstrate that they have followed a structured training programme and have an understanding of the core competencies required to safely prepare nutritious and appropriate food

during a voyage. It will also act as a record of their experience and career progression and can be used at any level and in any country, both on board and at maritime catering academies.

The new record book has been written based on the competence requirements of the ILO Guidelines on the training of ships’ cooks, enabling evidence of competency to be recorded in all key areas identified by the ILO. It covers both practical and safety skills such as specific cooking techniques and dealing with allergies and food intolerances.

Natalie Shaw, Director of Employment Affairs for the International Chamber of Shipping says: “Seafarers live and work on board ship and mealtimes serve to influence attitudes regarding long periods at sea. Ships’ cooks are essential to the efficient and safe running of any vessel. It is difficult to overestimate how important food and nutrition are to seafarers. Not only

does good food enable the seafarer to perform duties effectively, it is also crucial to maintaining the health and morale of crews.

“Indeed the quality of food on board is so essential to crew welfare that it is documented in the ILO Maritime Labour Convention (MLC), which recognises how important it is to have and serve sufficient food and drinking water of appropriate quality on board by qualified and trained catering personnel.”

The Training Record Book for Ships’ Cooks is the first global resource available to the industry and is an essential companion to the formal training undertaken by ships’ cooks both on board and onshore. Ships’ cooks have very varied backgrounds ranging from the professional chef on a cruise ship through to the reserve ship’s cook covering the mess when the ship’s cook is on shore leave, and this new record book supports those at all levels. (Source: ICS)

Panama reaffirms commitment to int’l compliance

The Panama Maritime Authority (AMP), the entity responsible for the administration of the Panama Ship Registry, has bolstered its operation for strengthening the application of its procedures, especially those related to due diligence and international compliance of its fleet. The AMP has reinforced methodologies, acquired new tools, trained personnel and created new areas within the Directorate General of Merchant Marine, while implementing the highest international standards that guarantee the international compliance of the fleet. Recently, Panama participated in the experts’ meeting on the Full Implementation of the Maritime Resolutions of the UN Security Council, of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK).

The experts’ meeting also considered the registration of ships, access to ports and the provision of

services to ships registered with the DPRK. The purpose of this activity, organized by Panama, reaffirms its commitment to international compliance by the United States and the Netherlands. It brought together representatives of governments and authorities interested in exchanging information, improving efforts for the implementation of maritime regulations and incorporating omitted elements regarding their compliance.

With 53 countries represented at the meeting, Panama reiterated its commitment to international compliance such as:

- Strengthening due diligence and its application.
- The Implementation, Control and Enforcement of International Measures Section has been created to follow up on international norms and measures, through the verification of the official sites of

organizations such as the UN’s Security Council.

- The review and update of the flagging procedure, its requirements and controls, by the Ship Registry’s Vessel Registration Department.

- The constant communication with Panama-flagged shipowners for urging them to keep their Long-Range Identification and Tracking System and Automatic Identification System equipment active, as well as to stay out of conflict areas where their commercial operations could be compromised.

These implementations and actions are to ensure that vessels and companies that own and operate vessels flying the Panamanian flag comply with international regulations on terrorism, money laundering and other illicit activities. (Source: Panama Maritime Authority)

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Publisher: Mitsuharu Matsuura

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