

## **AFCD reminds public not to pursue whale or risk breaking law**

The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) today (September 11) patrolled the waters off South District, Hong Kong Island together with relevant departments and the Ocean Park Conservation Foundation Hong Kong (OPCFHK). With the help of the Government Flying Service, a whale was sighted in the concerned waters this evening. Yet it disappeared afterwards. The AFCD will continue to patrol the waters in the vicinity with relevant departments and the OPCFHK to ascertain the location of the whale, its species, health condition, etc, and closely monitor the situation.

The AFCD will step up patrol of waters where the whale has been sighted with the Marine Police, and the Marine Department. Government officers on spot will instruct vessels approaching the whale to leave and take enforcement action against those who refuse to co-operate to ensure that the whale is not disturbed by vessels.

A spokesman for the AFCD said, "Members of the public should not go on boat trips to watch or pursue whales sighted in Hong Kong waters. In case whales are spotted at sea, they should keep a distance of no less than 100 metres, slow down their vessels and leave as soon as possible. Otherwise, government officers may take enforcement action."

The spokesman said, "All cetaceans are protected by the Wild Animals Protection Ordinance (Cap. 170). Irresponsible whale watching behaviour may constitute an act of wilful disturbance of protected wild animals. Offenders are liable to one year's imprisonment and a fine of \$100,000 upon conviction."

The AFCD is also consulting local and overseas experts on the species, condition and appropriate protection measures for the whale.