

Government appeals to foreign domestic helpers and members of the public to comply with anti-epidemic regulations and measures on prohibition of group gatherings of more than two persons and mask-wearing in public places

The Labour Department (LD) today (January 3) said that joint operations during New Year holidays were conducted in collaboration with the Hong Kong Police Force (the Police), the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD), the Home Affairs Department and the Leisure and Cultural Department (LCSD), including mobile broadcasts in popular gathering places of foreign domestic helpers (FDHs) to call upon them to comply with the anti-epidemic regulations on the prohibition of group gatherings of more than two persons and mask-wearing in public places. In addition, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD), the Police and the FEHD also conducted publicity in Tai Lam Country Park in Tai Tong, Yuen Long.

From December 31 last year to January 3 this year, Government departments' joint operations covered popular FDH gathering places (including Tamar Park in Admiralty, Victoria Park in Causeway Bay, footbridge near Fa Yuen Street in Mong Kok, the Cultural Centre in Tsim Sha Tsui, and various places at Central, Wan Chai, Sham Shui Po, Kowloon City, Wong Tai Sin, Tsing Yi and Tseung Kwan O). The LD also arranged mobile broadcast for three consecutive days during the public holidays. Publicity vans parked in the above-mentioned districts to broadcast reminders in Chinese, English and major FDH languages (including Tagalog, Bahasa Indonesia and Thai) to call upon FDHs to comply with the regulations on the prohibition of group gatherings of more than two persons and mask-wearing in public places. During the joint operations, multiple-language promotional leaflets were distributed by officers from the departments concerned to appeal to FDHs to maintain environmental hygiene and refrain from conducting unlicensed hawking activities, including cooked food or other hawking activities. Also, the Police increased manpower to step up patrols at those places and the FEHD took follow-up actions to keep those places clean.

On January 3, the AFCD, the Police and the FEHD arranged mobile broadcast of promotional audio clip through publicity vans and put up signage and banners at various locations in Tai Lam Country Park in Tai Tong, Yuen Long, to appeal to countryside visitors to abide by the regulations and measures concerning complying with the restrictions on group gatherings, observing social distancing and mask-wearing etc. Promotional leaflets were distributed by officers from the departments concerned to appeal to cherish our environment and maintain personal and environmental hygiene; the AFCD and

the Police increased manpower to step up patrols at those places; and the FEHD took follow-up actions to keep those places clean.

A Government spokesman said, "The Government had amended the Prevention and Control of Disease (Prohibition on Group Gathering) Regulation (Cap. 599G) to prohibit group gatherings of more than two persons in public places. A person who participates in a prohibited group gathering may be charged a fixed penalty, the amount of which has been raised to \$5,000. At the same time, the fixed penalty charged against a person who fails to wear a mask in accordance with the Prevention and Control of Disease (Wearing of Mask) Regulation (Cap. 599I) has also been raised to \$5,000. The Government will continue to conduct publicity to FDHs and remind them to strictly observe the relevant regulations, and to avoid gatherings (including in boarding facilities), food sharing and other social activities on their rest days and stay at home for rest as far as possible to safeguard their personal health."

The Government spokesman added, "The LCSD also appealed to the public to observe appropriate social distancing and abide by regulations on the prohibition of group gatherings and the requirement to wear a mask at all times at the department's venues. Offenders are liable to prosecution. In addition, the AFCD also appealed to country park visitors to wear a mask and maintain an appropriate social distance with others. They should avoid going to crowded places during the peak period, and should not have meal gatherings in crowded places. Visitors should keep the countryside clean and maintain personal and environmental hygiene. They should properly dispose of used masks and waste and 'bring your litter home'. Anyone who commits a littering offence in a country park area is liable to a fixed penalty of \$1,500."

As observed on site, the vast majority of FDHs and members of the public had observed the relevant regulations after being advised. For example, during the joint operations today, the FDHs at the footbridge near Fa Yuen Street in Mong Kok left on their own volition after advice was given. As for those who still refused to abide by the regulations after repeated reminders, the relevant departments had taken enforcement actions. For the four-day period up to the expiry of the first cut-off stage today, a total of 51 fixed penalty notices at \$5,000 were issued during the aforementioned joint operations.

The Government will continue to step up publicity and enforcement, and as needed conduct joint operations to ensure compliance with the relevant requirements. The Government also appeals to all to exercise self-discipline and co-operate to fight the virus together and abide by the law.