

# Government urges public again to avoid grave sweeping on day of Ching Ming Festival

In view of the current severe epidemic situation, a Government spokesman today (April 3) strongly appealed to members of the public again to refrain from going out unnecessarily and to defer their plans to go grave sweeping on the day of the Ching Ming Festival tomorrow as far as possible to avoid the crowded peak period of the festival. Doing so can lessen crowd conditions and reduce close contact, thereby reducing the risk of spreading the COVID-19 virus through social contact.

The Government reminded grave sweepers to avoid group gatherings when grave sweeping, maintain an appropriate social distance with others at all times, and avoid meal gatherings with relatives and friends at worship sites.

The spokesman said, "The Prevention and Control of Disease (Prohibition on Group Gathering) Regulation (Cap. 599G) came into effect on March 29. The Regulation prohibits group gatherings with more than four people in public places, and grave sweeping is not exempted. Therefore, members of the public have to abide by the group gathering regulation by having not more than four people together during grave sweeping, unless they are living in the same household. In addition, a distance of at least 1.5 metres should be maintained between grave sweeper groups."

For members of the public visiting cemeteries and columbaria to pay respects to ancestors during the Ching Ming Festival, the spokesman reminded that they should seek medical advice promptly and refrain from going grave sweeping if they have fever or respiratory symptoms. Grave sweepers should maintain good personal hygiene, wear surgical masks and always keep their hands clean. They are also reminded to keep flammable items (e.g. alcohol antiseptic sprays and alcohol-based hand sanitisers) away from ignition sources, incense and candles, and furnaces for the sake of safety.

The spokesman particularly reminded members of the public wishing to go to the Mainland to pay respects to their ancestors to consider postponing their trips in light of the latest epidemic prevention, control and quarantine measures (including compulsory quarantine) implemented by various provinces and cities in the Mainland for arriving travellers.

The spokesman stressed, "At this critical moment when the epidemic situation remains severe, members of the public should co-operate and work together to fight the virus. They should seriously consider postponing grave sweeping activities to avoid the crowded times during the Ching Ming Festival so as to prevent and protect themselves and their family members from infection, thereby preventing the spread of the virus in the community."