

Joint operation against improper use of bright light for fishing and illegal fishing activities (with photos)

The Marine Department (MD) together with the Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF) and the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) conducted a joint operation against the improper use of bright light for fishing and illegal fishing activities in the southern waters of Hong Kong last night (August 10).

During the operation, two vessels were inspected and they were suspected to have used bright light improperly for fishing, while no vessel was found to be engaged in illegal fishing. The MD will further investigate the cases and gather evidence for prosecution.

A spokesman for the MD reminded the public that under the Shipping and Port Control Regulations (Cap. 313A), vessels are allowed to use bright light for fishing in the areas where bright light fishing is permitted. However, the use of bright light on any vessel for the purpose of fishing or attracting fish in Hong Kong waters shall comply with the requirements of Cap. 313A and the Merchant Shipping (Local Vessels) (General) Regulation (Cap. 548F), i.e. a bright light shall be so constructed, shaded, installed and used that no light emitted from it shall be visible, whether directly or by reflection from any source other than sea surface, above a horizontal plane passing through the lowest edge of the light source. A person who contravenes the related legislation commits an offence and is liable to a fine of \$5,000 upon conviction.

In addition, under the Fisheries Protection Ordinance (Cap. 171), only a vessel registered under the Fisheries Protection Ordinance can be used for fishing in Hong Kong waters and only the fishing methods listed on its Certificate of Local Fishing Vessel Registration can be employed for fishing by the vessel. Any offender upon conviction is liable to a fine of \$100,000 and imprisonment for six months.

To ensure the order of marine traffic and navigation safety of vessels, in addition to daily patrols and enforcement actions in various districts of Hong Kong waters, the MD also maintains close co-operation with the HKPF and the AFCD from time to time to conduct target-based joint operations, including inspections of suspected improper use of bright light for fishing and illegal fishing activities. From January to July 2023, the MD conducted a total of 21 special operations in areas including the waters of southern Lantau Island, southern Lamma Island and east of Hong Kong. Sixteen fishing vessels were suspected of violating relevant marine legislation. The MD is now taking follow-up actions and will instigate prosecution against these

fishing vessels.

The MD will continue to step up patrols to combat the improper use of bright light for fishing activities so as to ensure safe navigation. The department will also meet with local fishery organisations from time to time to distribute relevant publicity and education materials to the trade. Information on the proper use of bright light for fishing is available on the MD's website: www.mardep.gov.hk/en/publication/materials/pdf/publf.pdf.

