

Joint operations conducted 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 and the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD), conducted joint operations against the improper use of bright light for fishing and illegal fishing activities in the eastern and southern waters of Hong Kong on June 14 and 18.

During the operations, five vessels were inspected and among them four vessels 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 in order to combat any relevant irregularities.

A spokesman for the MD reminded the public that under the Shipping and Port Control Regulations (Cap. 313A), vessels are allowed to use a bright light for fishing in areas where bright-light fishing is permitted. However, the use of a 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 so that no light emitted from it shall be visible, whether directly or by reflection from any source other than the 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 Marine Police and the AFCD from time to time to conduct target-based joint operations, including inspections involving the suspected improper use of a bright light for fishing and illegal fishing activities. From January to May 2024, the MD conducted a total of 25 special operations in areas including the waters of southern Lantau Island, southern Lamma Island, south of Hong Kong and east of Hong Kong. Six prosecutions had been initiated against the fishing vessels in relation to illegal bright-light fishing. The MD is now

taking follow-up actions.

The MD will continue to step up patrols to combat the improper use of bright light for fishing activities 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/filemanager/en/share/publications/pdf/materials/pu_blf.pdf.

