

Labour Department reminds foreign domestic helpers to comply with social distancing measures

With the Easter holidays around the corner, the Labour Department (LD) today (April 14) again reminded foreign domestic helpers (FDHs) to comply with social distancing measures announced by the Government.

An LD spokesman said, "According to the Prevention and Control of Disease (Prohibition on Gathering) Regulation (Cap. 599G) and the Prevention and Control of Disease (Wearing of Mask) Regulation (Cap. 599I), a person who participates in a prohibited group gathering of more than two persons in a public place or fails to wear a mask in accordance with the requirement may be charged a fixed penalty of \$5,000. During the Easter holidays (April 15 to 18), the LD will, in collaboration with the Hong Kong Police Force, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, the Home Affairs Department and the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, conduct mobile broadcasts in multiple languages and joint operations at Central, Tamar Park in Admiralty, Victoria Park in Causeway Bay, the North Point Promenade, the pedestrian footbridge at Mong Kok Road, the Star Ferry Pier in Tsim Sha Tsui, Morse Park in Wong Tai Sin, Tseung Kwan O Waterfront Park and other places to call upon FDHs to comply with the relevant regulations. Relevant departments will take enforcement action against those who refuse to abide by the regulations."

The spokesman continued, "We remind FDHs to strictly observe the regulations and appeal to them to avoid gatherings (including those in boarding facilities), food sharing and other social activities on their rest days and holidays, and stay at home for rest as far as possible in order to safeguard their personal health and reduce the risk of infection. We also appeal to employers to explain the current special circumstances when discussing rest day arrangements with their FDHs and call for their mutual understanding."

The LD reminds employers that under the Employment Ordinance, an employer may reach an agreement with the FDH to assign another rest day to substitute the original rest day. The other rest day must be within the same month before the original rest day or within 30 days after it. At the same time, employers must not require FDHs to work on their rest days. If an employer requests an FDH to work on a rest day, the employer must substitute another rest day for the FDH within 30 days after the original rest day; the employer must also notify the FDH of the arrangement within 48 hours after the latter is required to work. An employer who compels his/her FDH to work on a rest day without the agreement of the FDH or fails to grant rest days to the FDH is in breach of the Employment Ordinance and is liable to prosecution and, upon conviction, to a maximum fine of \$50,000.

Should FDHs and their employers have any enquiries on employment

matters, they may contact the LD through the dedicated FDH hotline at 2157 9537 (manned by 1823), by email to fdh-enquiry@labour.gov.hk or through the online form on the dedicated portal (www.fdh.labour.gov.hk).