

Man driving fishing vessel into Sham Wan Restricted Area using snake cages for fishing sentenced

A local coxswain was convicted today (March 12) for breaching the Wild Animals Protection Ordinance (Cap. 170) and the Fisheries Protection Ordinance (Cap. 171) as he drove a fishing vessel, with individuals on board using snake cages (a type of cage traps that has been banned in Hong Kong waters) for fishing, into the waters of Lamma Island Sham Wan Restricted Area of Hong Kong during the restricted period last year.

A spokesman for the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) noted that, acting on intelligence, AFCD officers investigated a suspected case of illegal fishing using snake cages in the abovementioned waters at around 2am on August 5, 2023. Charges were then laid against the male coxswain concerned for breaching the Wild Animals Protection Ordinance and the Fisheries Protection Ordinance. He was convicted today at the Eastern Magistrates' Courts and fined \$3,450.

The spokesman said, "The Government is committed to combatting illegal fishing activities in Hong Kong waters and unauthorised entry to the restricted area. The AFCD will continue to step up patrols and take stringent enforcement action."

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. The condition of the Certificate of Registration of Local Fishing Vessel regarding cage traps stipulates that any collapsible cage traps should not be connected in any way to another; or should not exceed five metres in any of its extended dimensions. Hence, fishing using snake cages is in breach of the registration conditions. Offenders are liable to a maximum fine of \$100,000 and six months' imprisonment upon conviction.

In addition, green turtle is an endangered species protected by the Wild Animals Protection Ordinance in Hong Kong. It is also the only sea turtle species that nests in Hong Kong. The sandy beach at Sham Wan on Lamma Island is the only site in Hong Kong and one of the few sites in the South China Sea at which green turtles nest from time to time. Green turtles are known to stay in waters adjacent to their natal beaches before and in between their nesting. During the period, breeding green turtles are particularly sensitive to human disturbance, which may frighten them and cause them to abandon nesting. Hence, the AFCD has stipulated a restricted period between April and October during which vessels are prohibited from entering the area. Unauthorised entry to the restricted area is subject to a maximum fine of \$50,000 upon conviction.

SWD invites applications for IT schemes for persons with disabilities

The Social Welfare Department (SWD) is inviting eligible individuals or organisations to submit applications from tomorrow (March 13) until April 17 for the IT Scheme for People with Visual Impairment (7th Round). Eligible individuals may also apply for the Central Fund for Personal Computers (49th Round) during the same period.

The objectives of the IT Scheme for People with Visual Impairment are to support non-profit-making and non-governmental organisations providing services or schooling for people with visual impairment (PVI) as well as tertiary institutions to acquire advanced Chinese screen readers, Braille displays of 40 cells and accessories/portable devices to facilitate PVI's browsing the Internet, and to subsidise individual PVI with economic difficulties to purchase these devices to meet their needs on studying or employment.

Subsidies will be granted to successful organisational applicants for purchasing high-performance Chinese screen readers (capped at \$9,800 per set) and/or Braille displays (capped at \$36,000 per set) and/or accessories/portable devices (capped at \$66,300 per set) on the reference list under the Scheme. Successful individual applicants will be sponsored to purchase high-performance Chinese screen readers with an amount not more than \$9,800 and/or accessories/portable devices not more than \$49,600 and/or Braille displays on the same reference list not more than \$32,400.

Eligible organisations may lodge their applications by completing the designated forms. For individual applicants, a nomination from subvented non-governmental rehabilitation organisations, the student affairs offices of local tertiary institutions, principals of local secondary/primary schools, or the Selective Placement Division of the Labour Department (LD) is required, and the application should be submitted through the nominating organisation in the designated form. Quotations for the devices concerned must be submitted together with the applications. Invitation letters have been sent to the relevant organisations to invite nominations.

The Central Fund for Personal Computers aims to assist eligible persons with disabilities in acquiring the necessary computer facilities for self-employment or receiving supported employment services at home with the guidance and follow-up services provided by the referral rehabilitation organisations or the Selective Placement Division of the LD. Applicants must:

- (a) be users of rehabilitation services of and nominated by rehabilitation service organisations or the Selective Placement Division of the LD;
- (b) have difficulties in engaging in open employment;

- (c) provide a viable business plan which requires the use of computer facilities;
- (d) have financial difficulty in acquiring the computer facilities necessary for implementation of the business plan;
- (e) be capable of using a computer to carry out the business plan; and
- (f) obtain the consent of the nominating organisations or the LD to provide guidance and follow-up services after applicants' acquisition of the computer facilities.

Details of the above schemes are available on the SWD website (www.swd.gov.hk) and CyberAble.net (www.CyberAble.net). Information notes and application forms can be downloaded from the websites. For enquiries, please contact the Rehabilitation and Medical Social Services Branch of the SWD at 3586 3594, through email to eoimc@swd.gov.hk or by fax to 2834 7046.

Red fire danger warning

Attention duty announcers, radio and TV stations:

The fire danger situation today (March 12) is red and fire risk is extreme. The countryside is extremely vulnerable to fire. If you are planning to spend the day in the countryside, please take pre-cooked food for a picnic and take all measures to prevent hill fires. The penalty for lighting fires illegally in the countryside is \$25,000 and a year's imprisonment.

Postal services to Australia return to normal

Hongkong Post announced today (March 12) that, as advised by the postal administration of Australia, mail delivery services to Western Australia and Queensland previously impacted by rail incident and flooding; and mail delivery services to Victoria previously impacted by bushfires, have returned to normal.

Around 4 000 quality job vacancies to be offered at Greater Bay Area Youth Employment Scheme and Pursuing New Opportunities Job Fair

The Labour Department (LD) will hold the Greater Bay Area (GBA) Youth Employment Scheme and Pursuing New Opportunities Job Fair at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre in Wan Chai on March 14 and 15. Around 4 000 vacancies from various industries will be provided for job seekers, including positions which are more suitable for graduates of tertiary institutions.

Over 80 organisations will participate in the two-day job fair, including more than 20 organisations participating in the GBA Youth Employment Scheme, offering about 400 job vacancies in GBA Mainland cities, such as accountant, associate – assurance, operation data analyst, teacher, assistant manager, trainee (leasing/promotions/personal banking/corporate banking), new media marketing executive, IT recruitment specialist and digital marketing specialist, to eligible young people at a monthly salary of not less than \$18,000. Hong Kong residents who have earned bachelor's degrees or above from 2022 to 2024 can apply for the vacancies. Career talks on the GBA Youth Employment Scheme will also take place. Representatives from about 15 participating organisations will introduce the job opportunities to be offered under the scheme.

In addition, 60 different organisations will set up booths and conduct recruitment on the spot, providing over 3 500 quality jobs, among which around 2 000 are from air freight and transport, catering and hotel industries. A wide variety of positions are involved, including human resources officer, assistant marketing communications manager, management trainee, accountant, flight operations officer, assistant chemist, occupational therapist, programmer, administration officer and conservation assistant. Over 90 per cent of the vacancies are full-time jobs. Most vacancies offer monthly salaries ranging from \$14,000 to \$24,000 and more than half are open to job seekers without relevant work experience.

The event will be held at Hall 3G of the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre in Wan Chai, from 11am to 5.30pm. Admission is free, with final admission time at 5pm each day. Job seekers can find more details of the vacancies and the time schedule of the career talks on the LD's Interactive Employment Service website (www.jobs.gov.hk).