

Trawler suspected of operating illegally intercepted in joint operation (with photo)

A shrimp trawler suspected of operating illegally was intercepted in an anti-illegal fishing operation jointly mounted by the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) and the Marine Police in the waters of the Soko Islands area last night (October 24).

At about 7.10pm last night, AFCD officers and the Marine Police found a shrimp trawler suspected to be trawling in the waters east of Cheung Muk Tau. They signalled to the vessel to stop for an inspection but it failed to comply. The vessel arrest system was deployed to stop it. Apparatus suspected to be used for trawling were seized on board the vessel.

Charges were laid today (October 25) against two Mainland men found on the vessel. They were respectively suspected to have contravened the Fisheries Protection Regulations by using prohibited fishing gear and the Fisheries Protection Ordinance by failing to comply with instruction to stop the vessel for inspection. They will appear at the Eastern Magistrates' Courts tomorrow (October 26).

An AFCD spokesman reminded the public that the ban on trawling came into force on December 31, 2012. Under the Fisheries Protection Ordinance, any person who contravenes the ban is liable to a maximum penalty of a fine of \$200,000 and imprisonment for six months upon conviction.

The spokesman said that trawling is a non-selective fishing operation which damages the seabed and marine ecosystems. A ban on trawling brings this harmful depletion to an immediate halt, enabling marine ecosystems to be gradually rehabilitated to a sustainable level and be better conserved in the long run.

The spokesman said, "The AFCD and the Police will continue to carry out joint enforcement operations to crack down on illegal fishing activities."

