

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

A pair trawler suspected of operating illegally was intercepted in an anti-illegal fishing operation jointly mounted by the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD), the Marine Police and the fisheries authority of Shenzhen in the waters off the Tung Ping Chau area last night (April 25).

At about 11.50pm last night, AFCD officers found two trawlers suspected to be pair trawling in the waters west of Tung Ping Chau. They signalled to the vessels to stop for an inspection but the vessels failed to comply. AFCD and Marine Police officers chased and intercepted one of the vessels. Apparatus suspected to be used for trawling were seized on board the intercepted vessel. About 50 catties of catch was released back to the sea on site.

Three Mainland men found on the vessel were arrested for suspected to have contravened the Fisheries Protection Regulations by using prohibited fishing gear. Charges were laid against them today (April 26). They will appear at the Shatin Magistrates' Courts tomorrow (April 27).

The other vessel, although fled away into Mainland waters, was later intercepted by the fisheries authority of Shenzhen.

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 a halt, enabling marine ecosystems to be gradually improved and be better conserved in the long run.

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

