

Grave sweepers urged to prevent hill fires

The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) today (October 12) reminded people paying their respects to ancestors at graveyards in the countryside during the Chung Yeung Festival period to exercise caution and prevent hill fires.

An AFCD spokesman said it is an offence under the Forests and Countryside Ordinance (Cap 96) to burn incense improperly or leave behind kindling in the countryside. Any person who contravenes the ordinance is liable to a maximum fine of \$25,000 and one year's imprisonment.

"The AFCD will deploy staff and enforcement officers to patrol graveyards in the countryside during the Chung Yeung Festival period. Those who are found breaching the law will be prosecuted," the spokesman said.

The majority of hill fires in the territory are caused by human negligence. Accidents can be prevented if grave sweepers observe some simple guidelines:

- * Remove weeds around graves using tools and never burn weeds with fire;
- * Burning should only be done inside a container or iron bucket;
- * Never leave burning incense unattended; and
- * Make sure all kindling is put out before leaving.

The spokesman said that metal containers will be handed out at suitable locations in the country parks to help grave sweepers burn their offerings properly during the Chung Yeung Festival, adding that barbecues should only be carried out at designated sites in the country parks.

The AFCD will deploy additional country park wardens to step up the fire prevention efforts. They will patrol hill fire black spots and distribute hill fire prevention leaflets together with the Fire Services Department, the Police and the Civil Aid Service. Volunteer teams from the Hong Kong Hiking Association, China and the Scout Association of Hong Kong will visit grave sweeping areas and hiking trails to disseminate hill fire prevention messages to the public.

The spokesman also reminded members of the public to keep the countryside clean. Before leaving, grave sweepers and barbecue site users should clean up the site and not leave offerings or rubbish behind. As at October 7 the AFCD had issued fixed penalty notices to 115 persons for littering in country parks this year.

Missing man in Cheung Sha Wan located

A man who went missing in Cheung Sha Wan was located.

Tsang Tsz-kit, aged 24, went missing after he was last seen at the junction of Cheung Wah Street and Un Chau Street on September 15 afternoon. His family made a report to Police on October 9.

The man was located in a hospital on Kwai Chung Hospital Road yesterday afternoon (October 11).

Transcript of remarks by SLW on abolishing "offsetting" arrangement under MPF Scheme and maternity leave in Policy Address

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong, on abolishing the "offsetting" arrangement under the Mandatory Provident Fund (MPF) Scheme and maternity leave after attending a radio programme on "The Chief Executive's 2018 Policy Address" this morning (October 12):

Reporter: Mr Law, can you speak about the legislative timetable for the scrapping of the MPF "offsetting" mechanism? My second question is about maternity leave because the HA has announced yesterday that it would very soon, it seems that it would very soon implement the extended maternity leave following the footstep of the government. Do you hope other statutory bodies to follow the government's footstep as soon as possible?

Secretary for Labour and Welfare: We definitely welcome all employers to follow the practice of the government in the civil service, that is to extend the maternity leave from 10 weeks to 14 weeks. If they can afford, I would actually ask them if they can do more and the more, the better. So looking at what the response is from various bodies – in fact some employers are doing more than 14 weeks already – we will encourage all employers in Hong Kong to consider before the implementation of the amendment of the legislation on maternity leave if they can do a step very much like what the Hong Kong Government is doing right now. That would be better.

Reporter: How about the legislative timetable in scrapping the MPF "offsetting" mechanism?

Secretary for Labour and Welfare: As for the timetable in abolishing the "offsetting" mechanism for MPF and the severance payment and long service payment, we will try our very best to complete the drafting of the legislative amendment. However, because I would consider this as a complicated amendment, we should allow the Legislative Council (LegCo) sufficient time to go over the bill and to deal with some of those controversial parts of the bill. Therefore, if we can't table the bill before the end of 2019 or end of next year, it will be unlikely for the bill to be passed before this term of the Legislative Council. We then have to wait until the election of LegCo members in 2020. Hopefully if we can complete the legislative process before 2021, then it will take another two years for us to implement the whole thing. Then the earliest time for the implementation would be 2023.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)

Special traffic arrangements for race meeting in Sha Tin tomorrow

Police advise motorists that special traffic arrangements will be implemented in Sha Tin to facilitate the race meeting tomorrow (October 13).

The arrangements will come into effect two hours before the start of the first race and will last until the crowds have dispersed after the race meeting.

Appropriate traffic signs will be put up and police will be on hand to guide motorists.

The Police also appeal to people going to Sha Tin Racecourse for the race meeting and to Happy Valley Racecourse for cross betting to make maximum use of public transport.

Parking spaces at the two racecourses are available only to holders of appropriate permits issued by Hong Kong Jockey Club and any vehicles illegally parked will be towed away.

Missing man in Kwai Chung located

A man who went missing in Kwai Chung has been located.

Hou Po-hing, aged 53, went missing after he was last seen in a hostel on Shek Yam Road on October 10 evening. The staff of the hostel made a report to Police yesterday (October 11).

The man was located on Kau Yuk Road, Yuen Long last night. He sustained no injuries and no suspicious circumstances were detected.