

FEHD earnestly follows up on court ruling against eight former Principal Hawker Control Officers

A spokesman for the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) emphasised today (June 17) that the FEHD attaches great importance to staff discipline and integrity and will not condone any misconduct or illegal behaviour, following the District Court's sentencing of eight former Principal Hawker Control Officers for conspiracy to commit misconduct in public office. Any staff members found guilty of a criminal offence will not only be subject to court sentencing but will also face disciplinary sanctions by the department in accordance with the established civil service disciplinary mechanism. When conducting civil service recruitment exercises, civil servants must strictly comply with the relevant policies and procedures and ensure that the recruitment process is conducted according to the principles of fairness, transparency, and merits.

The FEHD will seek advice from the Civil Service Bureau to determine appropriate follow-up actions following the court judgment, including whether to consider cancelling, suspending, or reducing the pension benefits of the officers concerned under Section 29 of the Pension Benefits Ordinance (Cap. 99).

Following the incident, the FEHD has reviewed the recruitment procedures for Assistant Hawker Control Officers and introduced refinements to the modus operandi and the monitoring mechanism. Such enhancements include emphasising to recruitment board chairpersons and members that failure to uphold the principles of fairness, impartiality, and confidentiality during the selection process may result in disciplinary action or even criminal liability; adjusting the composition of recruitment boards to ensure a more balanced representation of relevant grades and enhance objectivity and diversity in the selection process; providing additional guidance to board secretaries to strengthen their role in supporting procedural fairness; and arranging for supervisory staff to observe interviews on an irregular basis and offer feedback on overall selection arrangements with a view to further ascertaining the propriety of the process.

In addition, the FEHD has strengthened integrity training for enforcement and supervisory officers at all levels, including inviting officers of the Independent Commission Against Corruption to conduct seminars on anti-corruption laws and related administrative codes to heighten staff awareness of corruption risks and the offence of misconduct in public office. The department also continues to use various channels to remind staff at all levels of the importance of upholding core civil service values and conduct at all times.