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Mid-Autumn Disaster: The Overwhelming Disposal of 2.7 Million Mooncakes, BBQ Tablewares and Leftovers

A Green Power survey shows that people are paying more attention to green packaging of moon cakes and will reuse or recycle moon cake boxes. However, the problem of discarding excessive moon cakes still needs to be addressed.

Carried out before the Mid-Autumn Festival weekend, the survey interviewed 302 households and projected that 2.7 million moon cakes would be discarded territory-wide. About 20% of these households said they would celebrate with barbecues, and 90% of them would use disposable utensils such as paper plates, paper cups and plastic forks. Basing on more than 2.24 million households, the survey estimated that celebrations would involve more than 5.6 million pieces of disposable utensils. The plastic used for manufacturing these items is equivalent to releasing 554kg of carbon dioxide.

Green Power also found that 10% of respondents would discard leftover barbecue food, wasting an estimated 51 tonnes of food – enough to feed a three-member family for 59 years. About half of the respondents also indicated they would not classify or recycle waste after their barbecues.

The survey results were released today at the “16th Clean-up the World in Hong Kong” held in Aberdeen Country Park, which was attended by Assistant Director (Nature Conservation & Infrastructure Planning Division), Environmental Protection Department, Mr. Vincent Tang; Legislative Councillor Ms. Audrey Eu; HK Electric’s General Manager (Projects), Dr. Tso Che-wah; and President of Green Power, Prof. Ho Kin-chung.

More than 40 volunteers from HK Electric joined the guests for the clean-up and urged people to reduce barbecue waste. They also handed out containers for picnic goers to take away leftover food. The volunteers also made the appeal to holiday-makers in Stanley and Shek O beaches.

Regarding traditional moon cakes and plastic lanterns, Green Power's Division Head of Scientific Research & Conservation Department, Dr. Cheng Luk-ki, pointed out that more people chose to buy moon cakes with "simple packaging" and about 70% of respondents indicated they would reuse or recycle the boxes. However, there was still a growing tendency to throw away excessive or expired moon cakes.

"We should buy food with a longer expiry period, or choose smaller gift sets containing only one or two moon cakes," Dr. Cheng suggested, while urging the public to reuse lanterns, even though they could afford to buy new ones.

"Clean-up the World in Hong Kong" is an international activity organised by the United Nations. Green Power has been the official organiser in Hong Kong since 1993. It is now held in more than 120 cities around the globe with more than 35 million people participating. Themed "Reducing Festival Waste and Enjoying a Green Festival", this annual campaign aims at encouraging the public to minimise waste and harm to the environment and the Earth, while celebrating a greener festival. A "Green Festival" website has been set up to provide information on tips to reduce festival waste. For details, please go to:

http://www.greenpower.org.hk/new/cuw/index_e.html

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