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Mookcake and BBQ Leftovers Surge

Severe Food Waste Problem during Mid-Autumn Festival

Environmental Group **Green Power** today releases the results of the latest “Consumption and Celebration Habits during Mid-Autumn Festival” survey, which reveals ongoing problems with waste arising from celebrating the Mid-Autumn Festival. The issue is particularly acute for food wastage, including as more people report discarding mooncakes, and amounts of leftovers from barbecues and family gathering dinners are rising. Hence, **Green Power** urges people to reduce festival waste, especially food.

“On average, the surveyed households discarded 0.91 mooncakes last year – a 12% increase over the 2010 survey figure,” said **Dr Cheng Luk Ki, Division Head of Scientific Research and Conservation of Green Power**. “We estimate that over 2.12 million were discarded in Hong Kong – enough to cover up to 25 basketball courts. If people have leftover mooncakes, we hope they will check the expiry dates, and donate them to charitable organisations or less fortunate people before they are due.”

The survey indicated a slight reduction in the numbers of families that wasted in family gathering dinners for the festival, with only half the surveyed households reporting food wastage. However, more than 70% of these households wasted around 10-20% of the food for the dinners, while in the previous survey the majority wasted less than 10%. Clearly, the food wastage problem persists, and there is room for improvement in estimating food portions.

Drastic increase in barbecue food wastage

Many families celebrate the Mid-Autumn Festival with barbecues, and the survey reveals a drastic increase in the amount of food wastage from Mid-Autumn festival barbecue activities – with each household leaving untouched an average of 10 steaks, 11 sausages and 10 meatballs for each barbecue. Based on these figures, **Green Power** estimates that over 481 tonnes of meat were wasted during Mid-Autumn Festival celebratory barbecues, and as over 20% of surveyed households indicated they immediately dispose of leftover food, up to 84 tonnes of meat were thrown away straight after the barbecues. “Barbecues not only lead to massive meat wastage, but there’s also wastage through burning charcoal and using disposable cutlery,” said **Dr Cheng**. “So we encourage people to celebrate in other ways, such as taking picnics to enjoy the moon.”

Hongkongers willing to change

Encouragingly, the survey also shows that nearly 50% of respondents are willing to change their Mid-Autumn Festival celebratory habits to relieve global warming. However, most of them believe “tradition” is the main deterrent for holding a green Mid-Autumn Festival. “Yet there are many environmentally friendly ways to celebrate the Mid-Autumn Festival in a traditional way,” says **Dr Cheng**. “For example, people can precisely estimate numbers of mooncakes and amounts of food they will need, as well as recycle mooncake boxes. In future, **Green Power** will highlight the relationship between festival waste and carbon emissions.”

Clean Up the World in Hong Kong

The survey results were released today during the 19th “Clean Up the World in Hong Kong” event, organised by **Green Power** with sponsorship from **Power Assets Holdings Limited (formerly known as Hongkong Electric Holdings Limited)**. Officiating were: **Mr Benny Wong Yiu-kam, Deputy Director of Environmental Protection; Mrs Rita Fan, Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress of the PRC; Ms Audrey Eu, Legislative Council Member; Mr Yee Tak-chow, HK Electric General Manager (Corporate Development), Professor Ho Kin Chung, President of Green Power and Dr Eric Tsang Po Keung, Chairman of Green Power.**

Mrs. Fan and **Ms. Eu** have been supporting the event for many years. This year, together with other guests, they helped clean up the rubbish and wax left over from Mid-Autumn Festival at Aberdeen Country Park, and shared their tips on celebrating a “Green and Healthy Mid-Autumn Festival”.

Power Assets hopes the event will encourage Hong Kong people to be aware of the festive waste problem, and celebrate Mid-Autumn and other festivals in greener ways. **Mr Yee Tak-chow, HK Electric General Manager (Corporate Development)** shared his tip for a “Green and Healthy Mid-Autumn Festival”: people should pay attention to packaging labels and avoid buying mooncakes with excess food additives; and he also suggests people choose low sugar and high fibre healthy mooncakes.

Mr Benny Wong Yiu-kam, Deputy Director of Environmental Protection, encouraged people festive foods produced locally or in nearby regions, as less fuel is used during transportation, reducing carbon emissions, and shorter transportation and storage times mean fresher and healthier produce.

Mrs Rita Fan, Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress of the PRC, suggested that people prepare dinners with “less meat and more vegetables”, as the carbon emissions in producing meat are 3 to 44 times more than those for producing vegetables, and excess meat consumption increases the risk of cancer.

More than 70 Power Assets volunteers also joined the Clean Up the World in Hong Kong event, helping clean up the rubbish and wax left over from the Mid-Autumn Festival. After the ceremony, the volunteers appealed to holiday-makers in Aberdeen Country Park, Stanley and Deep Water Bay, encouraging them to celebrate the festival in a green and healthy manner. They also handed out containers marked with “Eight Green and Healthy Actions for the Mid-Autumn Festival” and crop seeds for picnickers to take away leftover food, and urged holiday-makers to try nurturing plants to somewhat offset carbon emissions caused by transporting food.

“Clean Up the World in Hong Kong” is an international activity organised by the United Nations. This annual event is now held in more than 120 cities around the globe with more than 35 million people participating, and Green Power is the official organiser in Hong Kong. Since 2004, the theme has been “Reducing Festival Waste and Enjoying a Green Festival”, 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 established to provide information and tips on festival waste reduction. Before this year’s Mid-Autumn Festival, Green Power included “Eight Green and Healthy Actions for the Mid-Autumn Festival” tips in the site. Hong Kong people are encouraged to access the site in preparation for future Mid-Autumn Festivals. There are also other green tips for forthcoming Hong Kong festivals. For details, please visit:

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

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