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10,000 held in swoops on hawkers

THE Urban Services Department's general duties teams made a total of 10,623 arrests in the first quarter of this year on illegal hawkers who were found operating without a licence in the urban areas.

"The figure shows the department's determination to curb the activities of on-street unlicensed hawkers who have been causing obstruction and hygiene problems," staff officer of the Urban Services Department, Mr Shum Chee-wang, said yesterday.

Among the offenders, 1,368 were cooked-food hawkers, while 692 committed the offence of selling restricted food, such as Siu-mei and uncooked meat.

With the advent of summer months, Mr Shum reminded the public not to patronise unlicensed cooked-food hawkers as many diseases, including viral hepatitis, dysentery and typhoid may be easily contracted after eating unclean food.

During the raiding operations, 3,043 confiscations of goods left by the hawkers were made, in addition to 3,882 seizures with the arrested hawkers.

Illegal hawking is a serious offence under the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance, and is liable to a maximum fine of \$2,500 with a daily fine of \$150 and one month's imprisonment on the first conviction, while a maximum fine of \$5,000 with a daily fine of \$150 and six months' imprisonment may be imposed on subsequent convictions.

The ordinance also provides a maximum fine of \$10,000 with a daily fine of \$250 plus six months' imprisonment for selling restricted food without a licence.