

First conviction for illegal transshipment of goods containing asbestos materials by shipping company

TNT Express Worldwide (HK) Limited was intercepted illegally transshipping goods containing asbestos through Hong Kong to Sierra Leone from Malaysia. The company was convicted and fined a total of \$4,000 at Eastern Magistrates' Courts today (April 1) for contravening the Air Pollution Control Ordinance (APCO). This is the first conviction since the amendment to the relevant ordinance came into effect.

A spokesman for the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) said that a notification was received from the Hong Kong Customs and Excise Department in September last year of an interception of goods suspected of containing asbestos materials at the Asia Airfreight Terminal at Hong Kong International Airport. After investigation, EPD staff confirmed that the goods, with nine rolls of rope lagging containing asbestos weighing about 45 kilograms, were being transhipped by an international shipping company, TNT Express Worldwide (HK) Limited, through Hong Kong to Sierra Leone from Malaysia. The EPD prosecuted the company, which was responsible for transshipping the goods, under the APCO after gathering evidence.

The EPD spokesman reminded international shipping companies that the government has completely banned the import, transshipment, supply and use of all forms of asbestos so as to protect public health since the implementation of the Air Pollution Control (Amendment) Ordinance 2014 in April 2014. Anyone that imports or tranships asbestos or asbestos-containing materials without an exemption commits an offence and will be liable to a maximum fine of \$200,000 and six months' imprisonment.

CCF to hold public consultation session on Saturday

The following is issued on behalf of the Community Care Fund Secretariat:

The Community Care Fund (CCF) will hold a public consultation session this Saturday (April 6) to gauge public views on the formulation of assistance programmes. Members of the public are welcome to attend.

The consultation session will be held from 5pm to 6.30pm at the Hall, G/F, Tin Yiu Community Centre, Tin Yiu Estate, Tin Shui Wai, New Territories

(MTR Tin Shui Wai Station, Exit C).

Those who would like to attend the consultation session may call the CCF Secretariat at 2835 2279 during office hours (from 8.45am to 1pm and from 2pm to 6pm, Mondays to Fridays) or complete the online registration form at the CCF's website (www.communitycarefund.hk/en/form.asp) for seat reservation. Seats are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

Speech by CS at Belt and Road Advanced Professional Development Programme in Power and Energy Graduation Ceremony (English only)

Following is the speech by the Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, at the Belt and Road Advanced Professional Development Programme in Power and Energy Graduation Ceremony today (April 1):

Dr Lawrence Li (Deputy Council Chairman of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU)), Professor Xi Guang (Vice President of Xi'an Jiaotong University), Mr Su Qingmin (Director of the Management Centre of Educational Affairs of the State Grid of China Technology College), Mr Wan Chi-tin (Managing Director of the Hongkong Electric Company Limited), Mr Liu Zhiming (Deputy Inspector of the Department of Educational Scientific and Technological Affairs of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region), consuls general, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon. It is my great pleasure to be invited, now for the second time, to officiate at the graduation ceremony of the Belt and Road Advanced Professional Development Programme. First, I would like to extend my warmest congratulations to all graduates, particularly those from the Belt and Road regions.

Indeed, I am most impressed by the positive response that the programme has received. The return of this quadripartite flagship programme this year is most timely as the sprawling network of the Belt and Road Initiative spanning Asia, Europe, the Middle East and Africa has expanded rapidly over recent years. So far, more than 120 countries have indicated support for the Initiative.

Led by the Silk Road International School of Engineering and jointly developed by the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Xi'an Jiaotong University,

State Grid Corporation of China and Hongkong Electric Company, the Programme is well positioned to reinforce further our ties with emerging economies along the Belt and Road corridors and help our professionals tap the immense opportunities offered by the Initiative.

Embedded with "five areas of connectivity", namely policy co-ordination, financial integration, unimpeded trade, facilities connectivity and people-to-people bonds, the Belt and Road Initiative provides new impetus not only to the global economy, but also sustainable development. I believe that as part of PolyU's Belt and Road Strategic Platform, this Programme echoes well with one of the key focuses of the Initiative on the establishment of energy partnerships. Hong Kong has a unique role to play in this vision. The strengths of Hong Kong's energy sector in system operation, manpower development and project financing are most pertinent.

In respect of system operation, Hong Kong's electricity supply is safe, reliable and affordable, which is essential for powering economic growth. Hongkong Electric Company, a partner of this programme, has upheld successfully a reliability rating of over 99.999 per cent since 1997, reaching 99.9999 per cent in 2017, which is almost unparalleled in other parts of the world. I understand that you have visited their facilities and I am sure that you find their rigorous system and talent pool most impressive. Hong Kong stands ready to showcase our power companies' expertise and operational experience to other Belt and Road countries that have plans to develop and modernise their electricity systems.

As regards manpower development, PolyU is renowned for nurturing a pool of talented technicians and engineers in Hong Kong for over 80 years. It is the first publicly funded, post-secondary technical institution in Hong Kong that offers courses in mechanical engineering and building construction. Over the years, graduates of PolyU and other higher education institutions in Hong Kong have dedicated their career to ensuring that our electricity systems meet the highest international standards. They are the unsung heroes behind Hong Kong's success story. Given our institutions' significant contribution to professional education, applied research and community partnership, they are well positioned to be the pioneers in launching training programmes for professionals from Belt and Road countries, and I do encourage them to do so.

Regarding project financing, Hong Kong enterprises and professionals have been actively participating in numerous energy projects in regions along the Belt and Road. Our companies have not only invested in traditional electricity generation systems in India and Southeast Asia, but also in renewable energy and smart grids. As Asia's leading financial centre, Hong Kong is well placed to play on the strength of our financial infrastructure and comprehensive capital-raising channels to help meet the financing needs of Belt and Road investments and projects. I am certain that many energy infrastructure projects in the region will continue to benefit from our companies' investment. In fact, a company listed in Hong Kong has formed a partnership to establish a fund with an initial capital of US\$160 million to invest in the energy sector in Asia and markets along the Belt and Road corridors.

No less important, Hong Kong stands ready to be the professional services platform for Belt and Road projects. We have a deep pool of world-class talents in various areas who are experienced in leading and implementing international and large-scale projects. Their strengths cover not only the electricity and engineering industries, but also architecture, surveying, accounting, law and consulting, and more.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Belt and Road Initiative provides a golden opportunity for Hong Kong to capitalise on our distinct advantages as the key link of and the prime platform for the Belt and Road. In particular, for power and energy projects, Hong Kong has a lot to offer in terms of system operation, capacity building and project financing. I look forward to seeing graduates from this Programme participate in developments along the Belt and Road and foster our links upon returning to your countries.

On this encouraging note, I would like to extend again my warmest congratulations to the graduates today. I also wish the programme continuous success in the years to come. Thank you.

Update on cases of Legionnaires' disease

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (April 1) reported the latest number of cases of Legionnaires' disease (LD), and stressed the importance of using and maintaining properly designed man-made water systems, and that susceptible groups should strictly observe relevant precautions.

From March 24 to 30, one community-acquired LD case was reported. The male patient, aged 65 with underlying illnesses, lives in Shenzhen.

"Epidemiological investigations are ongoing to identify potential sources of infection, high-risk exposure and clusters, if any," a spokesman for the CHP said.

As of March 30, 15 LD cases had been reported in 2019. In 2018 and 2017, there were 105 and 72 cases respectively.

"Men, people aged over 50, smokers, alcoholics and persons with weakened immunity are more susceptible to LD. Some situations may also increase the risk of infection, including poor maintenance of water systems leading to stagnant water; living in areas with old water systems, cooling towers or fountains; using electric water heaters, whirlpools and spas or hot water spring spas; and recent stays in hotels or vessels," the spokesman said.

Legionellae are found in various environmental settings and grow well in warm water (20 to 45 degrees Celsius). They can be found in aqueous environments such as water tanks, hot and cold water systems, cooling towers, whirlpools and spas, water fountains and home apparatus which support breathing. People may get infected when they breathe in contaminated droplets (aerosols) and mist generated by artificial water systems, or when handling garden soil, compost and potting mixes.

Immunocompromised persons should:

- Use sterile or boiled water for drinking, tooth brushing and mouth rinsing;
- Avoid using humidifiers, or other mist- or aerosol-generating devices. A shower may also generate small aerosols; and
- If using humidifiers, or other mist- or aerosol-generating devices, fill the water tank with only sterile or cooled freshly boiled water, and not water directly from the tap. Also, clean and maintain humidifiers/devices regularly according to manufacturers' instructions. Never leave stagnant water in a humidifier/device. Empty the water tank, wipe all surfaces dry, and change the water daily.
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The public should observe the health advice below:

- Observe personal hygiene;
- Do not smoke and avoid alcohol consumption;
- Strainers in water taps and shower heads should be inspected, cleaned, descaled and disinfected regularly or at a frequency recommended by the manufacturer;
- If a fresh water plumbing system is properly maintained, it is not necessary to install domestic water filters. Use of water filters is not encouraged as clogging occurs easily, which can promote growth of micro-organisms. In case water filters are used, the pore size should be 0.2 micrometres (μm) and the filter needs to be changed periodically according to the manufacturer's recommendations;
- Drain and clean water tanks of buildings at least quarterly;
- Drain or purge for at least one minute infrequently used water outlets (e.g. water taps, shower heads and hot water outlets) and stagnant points of the pipework weekly or before use;
- Seek and follow doctors' professional advice regarding the use and maintenance of home respiratory devices and use only sterile water (not distilled or tap water) to clean and fill the reservoir. Clean and maintain the device regularly according to the manufacturer's instructions. After cleaning/disinfection, rinse the device with sterile water, cooled freshly boiled water or water filtered with 0.2 μm filters. Never leave stagnant water in the device. Empty the water tank, keep all surfaces dry, and change the water daily; and
- When handling garden soil, compost and potting mixes:

1. Wear gloves and a face mask;

2. Water gardens and compost gently using low pressure;
3. Open composted potting mixes slowly and make sure the opening is directed away from the face;
4. Wet the soil to reduce dust when potting plants; and
5. Avoid working in poorly ventilated places such as enclosed greenhouses.

The public may visit the CHP's [LD page](#), the [Code of Practice for Prevention of LD](#) and the [Housekeeping Guidelines for Cold and Hot Water Systems for Building Management](#) of the Prevention of LD Committee, and the CHP's [risk-based strategy](#) for prevention and control of LD.

IRD issues tax returns for 2018-19

The Inland Revenue Department today (April 1) issued about 190 000 profits tax returns, 130 000 property tax returns and 310 000 employer's returns for the year of assessment 2018-19.

About 2.68 million tax returns for individuals will be issued on May 2.

In this year's Budget, the Financial Secretary proposed a one-off reduction of 75 per cent of profits tax, salaries tax and tax under personal assessment for 2018-19, subject to a ceiling of \$20,000. Upon enactment of the relevant legislation, the department will effect the tax reduction in this year's tax bills.

"Individuals with rental income, if eligible, can enjoy the reduction by electing personal assessment. They can make the choice when completing their 2018-19 tax returns for individuals," a spokesman for the department said.

Given the legislative amendments to the Inland Revenue Ordinance (Cap 112) in 2018 (including the implementation of a two-tiered profits tax rates regime, transfer pricing rules and concessionary tax deductions), and the obligation to monitor the preferential regimes pursuant to the requirements of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, certain taxpayers are required to file supplementary forms to profits tax returns from the year of assessment 2018/19 onwards.

The two-tiered profits tax rates regime is implemented from the year of assessment 2018-19. The profits tax rate for the first \$2 million of assessable profits of corporations and unincorporated businesses will be lowered to 8.25 per cent and 7.5 per cent respectively while profits above that amount will continue to be subject to the respective rates of 16.5 per cent and 15 per cent. For connected entities, the two-tiered rates will only be applicable to one entity nominated among them. Taxpayers are required to state whether they are chargeable at the two-tiered rates, and for taxpayers having any connected entities, they are required to provide a complete list

of connected entities carrying on a trade, profession or business in Hong Kong in the specified supplementary form.

The department encourages taxpayers to use the convenient and easy-to-use services under eTAX. As in the past, an eTAX account holder can file through the Internet his property tax return in respect of a property owned by him and another person. Filers of employer's returns can sign through their own eTAX account and submit the annual employer's return with not more than 800 IR56B records. Employers with not more than 30 IR56B records may also choose to complete and submit IR56B directly online. Precedent partners of partnerships and directors, secretaries or managers of corporations holding eTAX accounts can also file profits tax returns for their businesses through their eTAX account.

"Using eTAX services is simple. Any registered taxpayer can log in to eTAX with his Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN) designated for eTAX login and the eTAX password registered with the department or his digital certificate issued by a recognised certification authority," the spokesman said.

If a taxpayer/filer of an employer's return has not yet registered for eTAX or has forgotten the password, he can open an eTAX account or apply for a new password at www.gov.hk/etax. They can choose their own TIN and password for login when they open their eTAX account.

Starting from this year, employers may choose to upload the IR56B data file through the new Mixed Mode submission service of the employer's return e-filing services. The filer of an employer's return only needs to sign and submit the paper annual return together with the duly signed control list (with Transaction Reference Number and QR code) generated from the system to complete the submission process. To assist employers to prepare the IR56B records, a new web-based IR56 Forms Preparation Tool has also been introduced.

Taxpayers/filers of employer's returns can visit the department's website at www.ird.gov.hk for common questions and answers on how to complete tax returns. Taxpayers/employers are reminded to file their properly completed tax returns on time. To facilitate the distribution and processing of returns received by the department, the employers can send the employer's returns back to the designated P0 Box printed on the top right hand corner of their returns (BIR56A). If tax returns are delivered to the department by post, sufficient postage should be paid to ensure timely and successful delivery. Please note that the current postage for local small letters weighing 30 grams or less is \$2. Taxpayers can visit Hongkong Post's website at www.hongkongpost.hk for the postage rates.

Underpaid mail items will not be accepted by the department. Mail items addressed to the department without sufficient postage will be returned by Hongkong Post to the sender, who will be charged with the deficiency plus a surcharge. Mail items without a return address will be disposed of by Hongkong Post in accordance with the established procedures for handling undeliverable mail. For proper delivery of tax documents to the department,

please ensure the mail items bear sufficient postage before posting.