

Hong Kong Customs seizes suspected scheduled dried seahorses and dried shark fins (with photo)

Hong Kong Customs seized about 140 kilograms of suspected scheduled dried seahorses and 220kg of dried shark fins from a container with an estimated market value of about \$420,000 at the Kwai Chung Customshouse Cargo Examination Compound on June 4.

Through risk assessment, Customs officers inspected a 20-foot container declared to contain fish maw arriving in Hong Kong from Indonesia. Upon inspection, Customs officers found the suspected scheduled dried seahorses and dried shark fins in the container.

After follow-up investigation, Customs officers yesterday afternoon (June 6) arrested a 64-year-old male director and a 63-year-old female director of a dried seafood shop suspected to be involved in the case in Sheung Wan.

Investigation is ongoing. The arrested persons have been released on bail pending further investigation.

Under the Import and Export Ordinance, any person found guilty of importing or exporting unmanifested cargo is liable to a maximum fine of \$2 million and imprisonment for seven years.

Under the Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance, any person found guilty of importing or exporting an endangered species without a licence is liable to a maximum fine of \$10 million and imprisonment for 10 years.

Members of the public may report any suspected smuggling activities to the Customs 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk).



Cluster of Carbapenemase-Producing Enterobacteriaceae cases in Shatin Hospital

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

The spokesperson for Shatin Hospital made the following announcement today (June 7):

Four male patients (aged 56 to 80) in a Medical and Geriatric Ward have been confirmed as being carriers of Carbapenemase-Producing Enterobacteriaceae (CPE) since May 31. The patients concerned are being treated under isolation with stable condition.

The Hospital Infection Control Team has followed up with the departments concerned and experts of the Centre for Health Protection. The following enhanced infection control measures have already been adopted in the ward:

1. Enhanced patient and environmental screening procedures;
2. Applying stringent contact precautions and enhanced hand hygiene for staff and patients; and
3. Enhanced cleaning and disinfection of the ward.

The hospital will continue to closely monitor the situation of the ward. The cases have been reported to the Hospital Authority Head Office and the Centre for Health Protection for necessary follow-up.

Traveller sentenced to imprisonment for smuggling incense tree wood chips (with photo)

A traveller who illegally exported incense tree wood chips has been convicted and sentenced to imprisonment at Fanling Magistrates' Courts today (June 7).

A spokesman of the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department

(AFCD) said that Customs officers intercepted an outbound male passenger, aged 25, at Shenzhen Bay Control Point and seized about 1.57 kilograms of incense tree (*Aquilaria sinensis*) wood chips from his backpack on June 5. The estimated market value was about \$125,600. Upon investigation by the AFCD, the man was charged with illegal export of endangered species, and was convicted and sentenced to two months' imprisonment at Fanling Magistrates' Courts today.

All *Aquilaria* species, including the native incense tree, are listed in Appendix II to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. They are regulated under the Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance.

The import, export, re-export or possession of specimens of scheduled species not in accordance with the Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance is an offence. The Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants (Amendment) Ordinance 2018 (Amendment Ordinance) came into effect on May 1, and the increase in penalties under the Amendment Ordinance also came into effect on the same day. The maximum penalty is a fine of \$10 million and imprisonment for 10 years. The specimens will also be forfeited upon conviction.

The spokesman also pointed out that according to the Forests and Countryside Ordinance, felling of trees on government land without permission is an offence. The maximum penalty is a fine of \$25,000 and imprisonment for one year.

The spokesman appealed to the public not to defy the law by smuggling agarwood or illegally felling incense trees. To enquire about the importation or exportation of endangered species and to report illegal imports or exports, the public can call the AFCD at 1823 or visit the website www.cites.hk.



Update on suspected food poisoning clusters related to food premises in Kwun Tong

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (June 7) reported an update on its investigations announced on June 5 into two suspected food poisoning clusters related to a food premises in Kwun Tong.

Three additional clusters were identified. Details are as follows.

The first cluster involved five women, aged 25 to 30, who developed fever, abdominal pain, diarrhoea and vomiting about eight to 27 hours after having lunch at the food premises on June 1;

The second cluster involved two men and four women, aged 23 to 44, who presented with similar symptoms about three to eight hours after having lunch at the food premises on June 4;

The third cluster involved one man and two women, aged 33 to 48, who had similar symptoms about 12 to 17 hours after having lunch at the food premises on May 31.

Among them, 12 have sought medical advice, one each from the first and second cluster required hospitalisation. All patients are in stable condition.

"To date, five recent clusters affecting 19 persons dining in the same food premises have been recorded. Epidemiological investigations show that the three additional clusters had meals at the food premises concerned before investigation and control measures instituted by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD). We have alerted the FEHD to the additional clusters and investigations are ongoing," a spokesman for the CHP said.

To prevent food-borne diseases, members of the public are reminded to maintain personal, food and environmental hygiene at all times. When dining out:

- Patronise only reliable and licensed restaurants;
- Avoid eating raw seafood;
- Be a discerning consumer in choosing cold dishes, including sashimi, sushi and raw oysters, at a buffet;
- Ensure food is thoroughly cooked before eating during a hot pot or barbecue meal;
- Handle raw and cooked foods carefully and separate them completely during the cooking process;

- Use two sets of chopsticks and eating utensils to handle raw and cooked food;
 - Do not patronise illegal food hawkers;
 - Drink boiled water;
 - Do not try to use salt, vinegar, wine and wasabi to kill bacteria as they are not effective; and
 - Always wash hands before eating and after going to the toilet.
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Office of The Ombudsman holds seminar on Hong Kong's postal services (with photos)

The following is issued on behalf of the Office of The Ombudsman:

The Office of The Ombudsman today (June 7) held a seminar on Hong Kong's postal services at the Central Mail Centre (CMC), with around 40 Advisers of the Office and Justices of the Peace (JPs) present.

In her speech, The Ombudsman, Ms Connie Lau, said, "The Post Office (PO) shoulders the important responsibility of handling the public's mail and has to face various new challenges brought about by changing times and technological advancements. Improvements must therefore be made in its mail delivery and mail tracing systems."

Ms Lau urged the PO to enhance its efficiency in handling mail, thoroughly consider the opinions and suggestions raised at the seminar, and actively communicate with stakeholders with a view to exploring with them the direction of future development in an effort to further improve its postal services.

In a guided tour arranged by the PO, Advisers of the Office and JPs present at the seminar looked at the CMC's equipment, such as the culler facer cancellers and the Optical Video Coding Integrated Systems, and had a chance to understand front-line postal services as well as the mail delivery procedures. Representatives from the PO also spoke with them on the challenges that have emerged in recent years, while the participants discussed and raised their views regarding the role of the PO in the territory-wide mail delivery service.

Since 2010, the Office of The Ombudsman has organised seminars each year on various topics for JPs and Advisers of the Office. These seminars aim to enhance their understanding of the work of different government departments and public organisations and the role of the Office, and provide a platform for them to express their views so that they can help promote the work of the

Office through their daily contacts with the public, thereby contributing to improvement in public administration and services in Hong Kong.

