

Operator and manager of unlicensed guesthouse fined

A man and a woman were each fined \$3,000 at the Eastern Magistrates' Courts today (May 19) for contravening the Hotel and Guesthouse Accommodation Ordinance.

The court heard that in October last year, officers of the Office of the Licensing Authority (OLA) from the Home Affairs Department, when searching the Internet for intelligence about unlicensed guesthouse activities, identified a suspected unlicensed guesthouse on Ying Hong Street in Tung Chung. The OLA officers posed as lodgers and successfully rented a room in the guesthouse on a daily basis through an Internet platform.

According to the OLA's records, the guesthouse did not possess a licence under the Ordinance on the day of lodging. The man and woman responsible for operating and managing the premises were charged with contravening section 5(1) of the Ordinance.

A department spokesman stressed that operating or managing an unlicensed guesthouse is a criminal offence and can lead to a criminal record. Upon conviction, the offender is liable to a maximum fine of \$200,000 and two years' imprisonment. Guesthouse licensees may advertise or offer to provide sleeping accommodation on the Internet. To assist the public and tourists to identify licensed guesthouses, the licensees should indicate clearly "Licensed guesthouse" in all promotional materials or advertisements related to the guesthouse.

The spokesman appealed to anyone with information about suspected unlicensed guesthouses to report it to the OLA by the hotline (Tel: 2881 7498), by email (hadlaeng@had.gov.hk), by fax (2504 5805) using the report form downloaded from the OLA website (www.hadla.gov.hk), or through the mobile application "Hong Kong Licensed Hotels and Guesthouses".

SFST visits Government Property Agency

The Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Mr Christopher Hui, visited the Government Property Agency (GPA) today (May 19) to learn about its enhanced property management measures and support for frontline workers amid the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as other major areas of work of the department.

Accompanied by the Government Property Administrator, Miss Leonia Tai, Mr Hui visited various divisions of the GPA and was briefed on their work,

including the infection control measures implemented in joint-user government office buildings to combat COVID-19 and operations after public services had returned to normal.

Mr Hui said, to recognise the contributions of cleaning and security staff engaged by government service contractors in the fight against the pandemic, the Government had made use of the Anti-epidemic Fund to provide a \$1,000 monthly allowance to eligible workers for not more than four months. He noted that the GPA, as one of the major departments engaging contractors for cleaning and security services, had made arrangements with contractors to disperse the March and April allowance amounting to approximately \$6 million, benefiting some 3 000 workers each month.

Separately, the Government announced earlier a series of measures to support enterprises and safeguard jobs to counter the increasingly challenging economic environment, among which was rent concession for about 290 tenancies managed by the GPA, benefiting about 140 tenants.

Another key area of work of the GPA is to take forward projects with cross-department facilities in implementing the "single site, multiple use" model in multi-storey development on government land, so as to optimise the use of land resources.

Mr Hui thanked GPA staff for their dedicated services, saying that the department provides strong support to all other government departments, providing timely solutions to ensure the effective implementation of infection prevention measures that safeguard the well-being of officers working in government buildings and members of the public who visit the premises for public services.

[Illicit cigarette seizures by Hong Kong Customs this year exceed annual figures of last four years \(with photos\)](#)

Hong Kong Customs has so far this year seized over 66 million suspected illicit cigarettes, a figure that already exceeds the annual seizure amounts for each of the last four years. In the latest three cases on May 16 and yesterday (May 18), a total of about 2.36 million suspected illicit cigarettes and about 30 000 suspected illicit heat-not-burn (HNB) products were seized at the Air Mail Centre of Hong Kong International Airport (HKIA), the Kwai Chung Customhouse Cargo Examination Compound and the River Trade Terminal, with an estimated market value of about \$6.6 million and a duty

potential of about \$4.5 million.

Customs officers inspected three inbound air mail parcels from Japan at HKIA's Air Mail Centre on May 16 and yesterday and seized about 30 000 suspected HNB products inside the parcels. After follow-up investigation, Customs officers yesterday arrested a 43-year-old man suspected to be connected with the case in a residential unit in Tseung Kwan O.

Through risk assessment, Customs officers yesterday selected a seaborne inbound container declared to contain instant noodles arriving in Hong Kong from Vietnam for inspection. About 2.2 million suspected illicit cigarettes were found inside the container. A 48-year-old woman and a 30-year-old man suspected to be connected with the case were arrested.

On the same day, Customs officers also selected a seaborne transshipment container, which was declared to contain assorted goods, from Huangpu, Guangdong, heading for Panama via Hong Kong for inspection. Upon inspection, Customs officers found about 160 000 suspected illicit cigarettes inside the container.

Investigations of all the cases are ongoing.

Customs will continue its risk assessment and intelligence analysis for interception at source as well as through its multi-pronged enforcement strategy targeting storage, distribution and peddling to combat illicit cigarette activities.

Customs made an annual seizure of 63 million suspected illicit cigarettes in 2016, followed by 60.7 million, 53.4 million and 55 million in the next three years.

Smuggling is a serious offence. 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 Dutiable Commodities Ordinance (DCO), tobacco products are dutiable goods to which the DCO applies. All HNB products containing tobacco in content are also dutiable goods subject to the control of the DCO. Any person who imports, possesses, sells or buys dutiable commodities without a valid licence commits an offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$1 million and imprisonment for two years.

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



[CE expresses sorrow over passing of Mr Allen Lee](#)

The Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, today (May 19) expressed deep sorrow over the passing of Mr Allen Lee.

"Mr Lee had served the community for many years and was influential in the political arena. He was appointed as a member of the Legislative Council (LegCo) early in 1978 and later became the Senior LegCo Member, and served the Council for 20 years. In the meantime, he was also appointed as a member of the Executive Council to tender advice to the Government. He was a member of the Preparatory Committee of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) and a Hong Kong Affairs Adviser, contributing to Hong Kong's return to the motherland. Caring about the country, he served as a deputy to the National People's Congress to take part in national affairs.

"Mr Lee still cared very much about society after he retired from the councils and often offered his unique and insightful comments on social issues. He also hosted various current affairs programmes in different media

and interviewed members of the political and business sectors. After assuming the office of the Chief Executive in 2017, the first television interview that I gave was hosted by Mr Lee, and the memory is still fresh in my mind.

"I am saddened by the passing of Mr Lee. On behalf of the HKSAR Government, I would like to extend my deepest condolences to his family," Mrs Lam said.

Communications Authority press release

The following is issued on behalf of the Communications Authority:

This press release summarises the decisions of the Communications Authority (CA) following its 95th meeting held in May 2020:

Broadcast complaints

The CA considered two complaint cases in respect of broadcasters' non-compliance with the Generic Code of Practice on Television Programme Standards (TV Programme Code) and the Generic Code of Practice on Television Advertising Standards (TV Advertising Code):

(a) complaints against the television programme "Headliner" broadcast on RTHK TV 31 and RTHK 31A channels of Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) and Jade channel of Television Broadcasts Limited on February 14, 2020. The CA took the view that the complaints in respect of accuracy of factual contents, denigration of and insult to the Police, and expression of a sufficiently broad range of views in personal view programmes were substantiated, and decided that RTHK should be warned to observe more closely the relevant provisions in the TV Programme Code; and

(b) complaint against the television programme "UEFA Champions League" broadcast on Hong Kong Open TV of Fantastic Television Limited (Fantastic TV) on September 22, 2019. The CA decided that the complaint was justified and that Fantastic TV should be advised to observe more closely the relevant provision in the TV Advertising Code.

Details of the above cases are at www.coms-auth.hk/filemanager/en/content_713/appx_20200519.pdf.

As the CA has received a very high volume of complaints on case (a) above, the CA will not issue individual replies to each complainant. The concerned complainants are invited to note the details of the CA's decision on the case at the link above.