

Woman fined for managing unlicensed guesthouse

A woman was fined \$6,000 at the Eastern Magistrates' Courts today (May 12) for contravening the Hotel and Guesthouse Accommodation Ordinance.

The courts 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 King's Road in North Point. 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 woman responsible for managing the premises was 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 (hadlaenq@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".

Import of poultry meat and products from areas of Vietnam suspended

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department announced today (May 12) that in view of a notification from the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) about outbreaks of highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza in Can Tho City, Dong Thap Province and Vinh Long Province in Vietnam, the CFS has instructed the trade to suspend the import of poultry meat and products (including poultry eggs) from the above areas with immediate effect to protect public health in Hong Kong.

A CFS spokesman said that Hong Kong has currently established a protocol with Vietnam for the import of poultry eggs but not for poultry meat. According to the Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong imported about 650,000 poultry eggs from Vietnam in the first three months of this year.

"The CFS has contacted the Vietnamese authorities over the issues and will closely monitor information issued by the OIE on the avian influenza outbreaks. Appropriate action will be taken in response to the development of the situation," the spokesman said.

Woman fined for illegal club operation

A woman was fined \$2,000 at the Eastern Magistrates' Courts today (May 12) for contravening the Clubs (Safety of Premises) Ordinance.

The courts heard that in August last year, officers from the Office of the Licensing Authority (OLA) of the Home Affairs Department conducted an inspection at a club on Hennessy Road in Causeway Bay, which had been operating with a certificate of compliance (CoC).

During the investigation, the club's staff failed to show a copy of the certificate of fire service installation and equipment. Condition 14 of the CoC was breached. The woman, being the CoC holder of the club, was charged with contravening section 21(2) of the Ordinance.

A spokesman for the department reminded all CoC holders to comply with the conditions as stipulated therein. Enforcement action will continue to be taken against illegal club operations.

Government to resume Second Reading debate of 10 bills

The Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, today (May 12) wrote to the Chairman of the Legislative Council (LegCo) House Committee (HC), Ms Starry Lee, indicating the Government's intention to resume Second Reading debate of 10 Government Bills at the LegCo meeting on May 27 and to first proceed with the National Anthem Bill and the Trade Marks (Amendment) Bill 2019 at this juncture.

Mr Cheung said, "The Government is pleased to note that the HC at its

Special Meeting held in the afternoon of May 8 handled a number of bills and subsidiary legislation which had been held in abeyance for seven months. The Government is also pleased to see that the impasse in the HC has been unlocked and will fully co-operate with LegCo in its proceedings on the legislative items in the remainder of the current term of LegCo."

The current legislative session will end in just about two months. All the bills which cannot complete the scrutiny process by the end of the current session in July this year will lapse upon the end of the current term of LegCo. At present, there are 26 bills under LegCo's scrutiny. After the HC Special Meeting held last Friday, 10 Government Bills are ready for resumption of Second Reading debate as and when appropriate.

The Government considers that LegCo should first proceed with the National Anthem Bill and the Trade Marks (Amendment) Bill 2019 at this juncture. The Bills Committees of these two bills had reported to the HC on the outcomes of their scrutiny as early as last year. As regards the remaining eight bills, the relevant procedures were completed at the HC Special Meeting last Friday. The Government has prioritised the order of resumption of Second Reading debate of these bills as set out in the Annex.

"The national anthem is the symbol and sign of the country. The National Anthem Bill seeks to implement the Law of the People's Republic of China on National Anthem (the National Anthem Law). The National Anthem Law was passed in September 2017 and added to Annex III of the Basic Law in November 2017. According to Article 18 of the Basic Law, the national laws listed in Annex III of the Basic Law shall be applied locally by way of promulgation or legislation by the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR). It is thus the constitutional responsibility of the HKSAR Government to implement the National Anthem Law locally as soon as practicable. The legislative principle of the National Anthem Bill is to fully reflect the legislative purpose and intent of the National Anthem Law, which is to preserve the dignity of the national anthem so that members of the community would respect the national anthem, whilst taking into account Hong Kong's common law system and actual circumstances," Mr Cheung stressed.

As regards the Trade Marks (Amendment) Bill 2019, Mr Cheung said, "The Bill seeks to amend the Trade Marks Ordinance (Cap. 559) to provide a basis for the application of the Protocol Relating to the Madrid Agreement Concerning the International Registration of Marks in due course. It will enable businesses to obtain and manage international trade mark registrations in a more convenient and more cost-effective manner. It is also in line with the Government's commitment to enhance Hong Kong's intellectual property regime."

The public officers in charge of the bills will, in accordance with the relevant requirements as set out in Rule 54(5) of the Rules of Procedure, give notice in writing delivered to the office of the Clerk after consultation with the HC Chairman to resume the Second Reading debate on the aforementioned 10 bills at the Council meeting of May 27.

"The HKSAR Government hopes to work closely together with LegCo Members to make the best use of time in concluding the legislative procedures of the above bills in the remainder of the current term of LegCo in accordance with the priorities," Mr Cheung said.

Hong Kong Customs and Marine Police join forces and seize suspected smuggled frozen meat (with photos)

Hong Kong Customs and the Marine Police mounted a joint operation yesterday (May 11) to combat smuggling activities, and detected a suspected smuggling case using a fishing vessel in the waters off Lung Kwu Chau. About 9 tonnes of suspected smuggled frozen meat with an estimated market value of about \$300,000 were seized.

Customs officers and Marine Police officers spotted a suspicious fishing vessel and a suspicious speedboat in the waters off Lung Kwu Chau yesterday. Officers took immediate action when the two vessels intended to leave Hong Kong waters. The batch of suspected smuggled frozen meat was seized on board the fishing vessel and two men aged 56 and 46 were arrested.

An investigation is ongoing.

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.

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

