

Hong Kong Customs steps up LNY law enforcement

With the imminent arrival of the Lunar New Year holiday period, the Customs and Excise Department (C&ED) today (January 22) announces that it has started a special operation to strengthen law enforcement actions at various boundary control points (BCPs) in a bid to combat smuggling and other illegal activities.

The C&ED reiterates that enforcement action will continue to target dangerous drugs. In some overseas jurisdictions, products containing cannabis or THC (a major cannabinoid present in cannabis plants), such as food products and drinks may be available for sale. The C&ED reiterates that it is a criminal offence under the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance to bring such products into Hong Kong and people should pay attention to the packaging labels of the products concerned while making purchases in those jurisdictions.

Under the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance, trafficking in dangerous drugs, or illicitly importing to and exporting from Hong Kong, procuring, supplying, manufacturing, or dealing in or with dangerous drugs, constitutes a criminal offence. The maximum penalty is life imprisonment and a fine of \$5 million. Illicitly possessing, or smoking, inhaling, ingesting or injecting dangerous drugs is subject to a maximum penalty of a fine of \$1 million and imprisonment for seven years.

People may bring in various types of commodities after travel and festive shopping outside Hong Kong. The C&ED reiterates that limits are set for alcoholic liquor and tobacco duty-free concessions. Incoming passengers are liable to a maximum penalty of a fine of \$1 million and imprisonment for two years upon conviction if they fail to comply with the respective provisions of the Dutiable Commodities Ordinance.

Members of the public are also reminded that it is an offence to bring into the city any game, meat, poultry and eggs without a health certificate under the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$50,000 and imprisonment for six months.

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

In addition, the import of mammals, birds and reptiles is controlled under the Public Health (Animals and Birds) Ordinance and Rabies Ordinance. Import of such animals are illegal unless a permit is obtained in advance from the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department.

Members of the public are also reminded not to bring manufactured

fireworks into Hong Kong. Under the Dangerous Goods Ordinance, any person who conveys such items without a valid licence commits an offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$25,000 and imprisonment for six months.

Joint operations with related government departments will be carried out at BCPs and within Hong Kong waters to intercept activities of bringing in and out of prohibited and controlled items.

In addition, travellers are also reminded that the Cross-boundary Movement of Physical Currency and Bearer Negotiable Instruments Ordinance has already been in force since July 16 last year. Under the Ordinance, a person who arrives in Hong Kong via a specified control point and is in possession of a large quantity of currency and bearer negotiable instruments (CBNIs) (i.e. the total value of which is more than HK\$120,000) must use the Red Channel under the Red and Green Channel System and make a written declaration to a Customs officer.

A person who is about to leave Hong Kong, or who arrives in Hong Kong other than at a specified control point, must disclose upon the request of a Customs officer whether he or she is in possession of a large quantity of CBNIs and, if so, make a written declaration.

During the Lunar New Year special operation conducted between February 1 and 19 last year, the C&ED detected a total of 655 cases with the arrest of 582 persons, resulting in the seizure of items with an estimated value of about \$53 million.

The C&ED reiterates that deployment will be strengthened for vigorous enforcement actions before and during the festive holiday.

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