

LegCo Panel on Security visits Air Mail Centre in Chek Lap Kok and Kwai Chung Customhouse (with photos)

The following is issued on behalf of the Legislative Council Secretariat:

The Legislative Council (LegCo) Panel on Security conducted a visit to Air Mail Centre in Chek Lap Kok and Kwai Chung Customhouse today (January 29) to understand the operations of the Customs and Excise Department (C&ED).

Accompanied by representatives of the Security Bureau and C&ED, Members first visited Air Mail Centre in Chek Lap Kok and learnt more about how C&ED combat smuggling using air postal packets and express cargoes. Members then visited Kwai Chung Customhouse and received a briefing by C&ED officers on the enforcement measures against smuggling activities using sea cargoes. Members also observed how C&ED officers examined air postal packets and cargoes.

Members who participated in the visit were the Chairman of the Panel, Mr Chan Hak-kan; Panel Members Mr Paul Tse, Mr Michael Tien, Mr Yiu Si-wing, Mr Chan Chi-chuen, Dr Elizabeth Quat and Dr Cheng Chung-tai.





Parent convicted of failure to register birth within prescribed period

A Hong Kong resident who failed to register the birth of his children within the prescribed period was convicted at Shatin Magistrates' Courts yesterday (January 28).

The Immigration Department (ImmD) investigated two cases of failure to register birth within the prescribed period. After investigation, it was found that one male failed to register the birth of his son and daughter, who were born in December 2015 and November 2017 respectively. He was charged with two counts of failure to perform the birth registration of a baby within 42 days after the day of such birth at Shatin Magistrates' Courts yesterday, and was sentenced to a fine of \$1,000 for each count of the offence.

The ImmD spokesman reminded that parents must fulfil their obligations under the law to register the birth of a child within 42 days so that the rights to medical treatment, education and welfare benefits entitled to their children are not affected due to delay in following the relevant procedures. Failure to register a birth within the prescribed period is an offence for which the maximum sentence upon summary conviction is a fine of \$2,000 or six months' imprisonment.

Hong Kong Customs smashes counterfeiting syndicate (with photos)

Hong Kong Customs conducted a special operation on January 27 and smashed a counterfeiting syndicate in Sham Shui Po. An upstairs showroom-cum-storage area and two storage facilities of suspected counterfeit goods were raided. A total of about 18 000 suspected counterfeit goods including handbags, wallets and shoes with an estimated market value of over \$11 million were seized.

According to earlier intelligence analysis, Customs suspected some counterfeit products were being sold in an upstairs showroom in Sham Shui Po. After in-depth investigation with the assistance of a trademark owner, Customs officers took enforcement action on January 27 and raided an upstairs showroom-cum-storage area and two storage facilities where the batch of suspected counterfeit goods were seized.

The showroom-cum-storage area and the two storage facilities were situated on different levels in the same commercial building. The showroom was not open to local people and only served foreign helpers.

During the operation, one man and four women were arrested, including three syndicate heads and two members, aged from 35 to 42.

Investigation is ongoing.

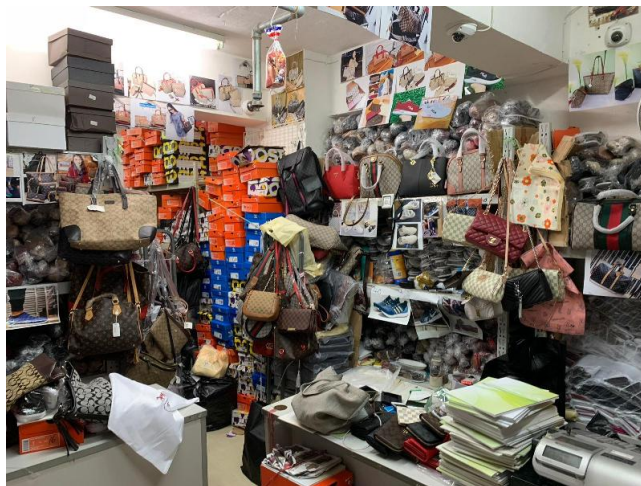
With the imminent arrival of Lunar New Year, Customs will continue to step up inspection and enforcement to combat the sale of counterfeit goods.

Customs reminds consumers to procure goods at reputable shops and to check with the trademark owners or their authorised agents if the authenticity of a product is in doubt.

Customs also reminds traders to be cautious and prudent in merchandising, since the sale of counterfeit goods is a serious crime and offenders are liable to criminal liability.

Under the Trade Descriptions Ordinance, any person who sells or possesses for sale any goods with a forged trademark commits an offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$500,000 and imprisonment for five years.

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



“Plastic-Free Takeaway, Use Reusable Tableware” pilot programme saves over 1 million sets of disposable tableware

The Environmental Campaign Committee (ECC) and the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) collaborated with the Hong Kong Catering Industry Association to jointly hold a publicity and education campaign entitled "Plastic-Free Takeaway, Use Reusable Tableware" to encourage members of the public to go plastic-and-disposable-free when they order takeaways. The first phase of the campaign – a two-month pilot programme at three major fast food chains in Hong Kong – concluded successfully on January 15. During the pilot programme, members of the public together reduced waste and saved more than 1.2 million sets of disposable tableware, and redeemed over 100,000 gifts (sets of reusable stainless steel cutlery or a complimentary hot drink).

The EPD spokesman said, "The campaign has enhanced the public's understanding of the importance of going plastic-free, and promoted behavioural changes to foster a green lifestyle by providing suitable incentives. During the pilot programme, the ECC and the EPD proactively promoted the campaign via social media, radio and newspapers. Given the extensive network of the three major fast food chains across the territory, the programme successfully aroused public awareness and support for going plastic-free, and had an impact on publicity and public education. This has helped promote the plastic-free practice in society and enabled the plastic-and-disposable-free culture to take root at the community level."

Under the pilot programme, members of the public could receive a sticker for each takeaway order made at the participating fast food chains without obtaining any disposable tableware. After collecting six stickers, they could redeem reusable stainless steel cutlery sponsored by the ECC for free, or enjoy a complimentary hot drink sponsored by the participating fast food chains, so as to encourage members of the public to cultivate the good habit

of bringing their own tableware and reducing the use of disposable plastic tableware. During the pilot programme period, the three major fast food chains distributed over 1.2 million stickers to take-away customers. Members of the public also redeemed about 86,000 sets of reusable stainless steel cutlery and some 22,000 cups of complimentary hot drinks.

The ECC and the EPD are working on the next phase of the publicity and education campaign with a view to further promoting the plastic-and-disposable-free message to members of the public. Views from various stakeholders to enhance the campaign are welcome.

In addition, starting this month, the Government has taken the initiative in banning plastic straws and polyfoam food containers in designated premises and canteens mainly serving government staff. Bureaux and departments, when inviting tenders for new or renewing existing contracts, will stipulate the requirement for restaurant operators in suitable government venues to avoid using disposable plastic tableware wherever practicable, including not providing disposable tableware for dine-in customers, not providing disposable tableware by default or in sets for take-away customers, and using tableware made of greener materials (e.g. plant fibre) to replace disposable plastic tableware. The EPD will commence a consultancy study in the first quarter of 2019 to consider possible control measures for disposable plastic tableware in Hong Kong in the long run. The study will in tandem take into account the experience gained from promoting using less disposable plastic tableware in government premises and the food and beverage sector.

More drop-in boxes for Caring and Sharing Scheme applications

The Government announced today (January 29) that more drop-in boxes for the Caring and Sharing Scheme (CSS) will be made available for the public to submit their forms when the CSS starts receiving applications from this Friday (February 1).

In addition to the 31 drop-in boxes announced earlier, extra boxes will be provided at about 200 estate offices of the Housing Authority (including Public Rental Housing estates and estates under Tenants Purchase Scheme and the Buy or Rent Option) and 14 enquiry centres of the Home Affairs Department. Details of the drop-in boxes can be found at Annex and on the dedicated website (css.gov.hk).

A Government spokesman said, "The provision of more drop-in boxes aims to help prospective applicants in submitting completed application forms together with documentary proof to the Working Family Allowance Office (WFAO) of the Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency.

"Application documents can also be sent to the WFAO by post to PO Box No. 2600, Mong Kok Post Office," the spokesman added. As announced earlier, the Government will adopt a lenient approach in handling applications sent by mail with insufficient postage to ensure that they can be processed."

The WFAO has also contacted the offices of Legislative Council Members, District Council Members, and non-governmental organisations who have collected application forms in bulk, with a view to making special arrangements for collecting bulk submissions (200 application forms or more) from them if necessary.

Anyone who intends to make bulk submissions (200 application forms or more) is requested to contact the WFAO at telephone number 3105 8321 or by email at whlchan_wfao@wfsfaa.gov.hk for arrangements.

The capacity of the 24-hour telephone enquiry hotline (3897 1088) has also been increased further to 60 lines to cater for public demand.

Successful applicants with no local bank account under their sole name will be invited to collect cash cheques in person from WFAO. The Government is actively exploring more locations for the collection of cash cheques to enhance convenience for such applicants, and will announce details at a later stage.