

Hong Kong Customs seizes suspected dangerous drugs (with photo)

Hong Kong Customs yesterday (December 18) seized about 1.1 kilograms of suspected cocaine and a small quantity of suspected crack cocaine with an estimated market value of about \$1.2 million in Mong Kok.

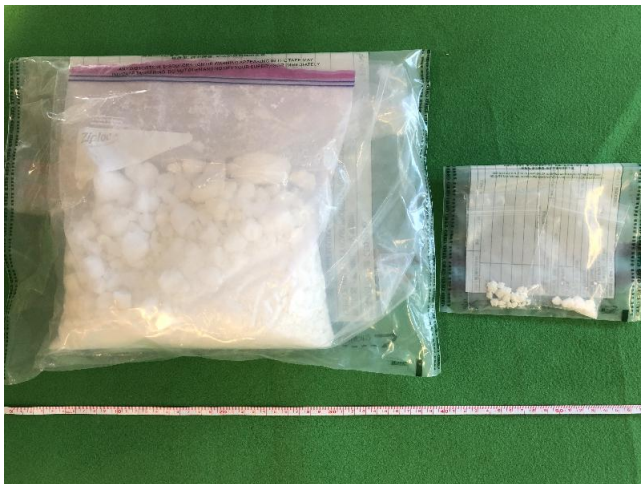
During an anti-narcotics operation in Mong Kok yesterday evening, Customs officers intercepted a woman and found about 100 grams of suspected cocaine and a batch of drug manufacturing and packaging paraphernalia inside a suitcase carried by her. A small quantity of suspected crack cocaine was also found in her bag. The 21-year-old woman was then arrested.

After follow-up investigation, the arrested woman was escorted to a hotel room nearby where about 1kg of suspected cocaine was further seized.

Investigation is ongoing.

Under the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance, trafficking in a dangerous drug is a serious offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$5 million and life imprisonment.

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



Appointment of Hong Kong, China representatives to ABAC

The Government today (December 19) announced that the Chief Executive

has re-appointed Dr Allan Zeman and Dr Jonathan Choi as Hong Kong, China (HKC) representatives, and appointed Dr Aron Hari Harilela as alternate representative, to the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Business Advisory Council (ABAC) until the end of 2020.

Dr Zeman is the Chairman of Lan Kwai Fong Group, Dr Choi is the Chairman of Sunwah Group and Dr Harilela is the Chairman and CEO of the Harilela Group.

Meanwhile, Mr Douglas Woo will be retiring from ABAC as an HKC alternate representative.

"I am very grateful to Dr Zeman, Dr Choi and Dr Harilela for agreeing to represent Hong Kong, China in ABAC. I am sure their wealth of business experience will inject further impetus into the work of ABAC.

"I would also like to express my appreciation to Mr Woo for his support and contribution to the work of ABAC since his first appointment in 2013," the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Edward Yau, said.

ABAC was established in 1996 as a permanent business advisory body to provide advice to APEC on business sector priorities. Hong Kong, China has appointed three representatives and two alternate representatives to ABAC. Currently, the Chairman of Esquel Group, Ms Marjorie Yang, is the other representative. The Deputy Managing Director of Ho & Partners Architects Engineers & Development Consultants Limited, Mr Nicholas Ho, is the other alternate representative.

Illegal worker jailed

A Pakistani illegal worker was jailed by Shatin Magistrates' Courts on December 17.

During a joint operation conducted by the Immigration Department (ImmD) and the Hong Kong Police Force codenamed "Champion" on December 13, enforcement officers raided a logistics company in Kwai Chung. A male Pakistani illegal worker, aged 29, was arrested. When intercepted, he was conveying goods. Upon identity checking, he produced for inspection a recognisance form issued by the ImmD, which prohibits him from taking employment. Further investigation revealed that he was a non-refoulement claimant.

The illegal worker was charged at Shatin Magistrates' Courts on December 17 with taking employment after landing in Hong Kong unlawfully and remaining in Hong Kong without the authority of the Director of Immigration or while being a person in respect of whom a removal order or deportation order was in force. He pleaded guilty to the charge and was sentenced to 15 months'

imprisonment.

The ImmD spokesman warned that, as stipulated in section 38AA of the Immigration Ordinance, illegal immigrants or people who are the subject of a removal order or a deportation order are prohibited from taking any employment, whether paid or unpaid, or establishing or joining in any business. Offenders are liable upon conviction to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and up to three years' imprisonment. The Court of Appeal has issued a guideline ruling that a sentence of 15 months' imprisonment should be applied in such cases.

The spokesman reiterated that it is a serious offence to employ people who are not lawfully employable. The maximum penalty is imprisonment for three years and a fine of \$350,000. The High Court has laid down sentencing guidelines that the employer of an illegal worker should be given an immediate custodial sentence. According to the court sentencing, employers must take all practicable steps to determine whether a person is lawfully employable prior to employment. Apart from inspecting a prospective employee's identity card, the employer has the explicit duty to make enquiries regarding the person and ensure that the answers would not cast any reasonable doubt concerning the lawful employability of the person. The court will not accept failure to do so as a defence in proceedings. It is also an offence if an employer fails to inspect the job seeker's valid travel document if the job seeker does not have a Hong Kong permanent identity card. The maximum penalty for failing to inspect such a document is imprisonment for one year and a fine of \$150,000.

Under the existing mechanism, the ImmD will, as a standard procedure, conduct initial screening on vulnerable persons, including illegal workers, illegal immigrants, sex workers and foreign domestic helpers, who are arrested during any operation, with a view to ascertaining whether they are trafficking in persons (TIP) victims. When any TIP indicator is revealed in the initial screening, the officers will conduct a full debriefing and identification by using a standardised checklist to ascertain the presence of TIP elements, such as threat and coercion in the recruitment phase and the nature of exploitation. Identified TIP victims will be provided with various forms of support and assistance, including urgent interference, medical services, counselling, shelter, temporary accommodation and other supporting services. The ImmD calls on TIP victims to report crimes to the relevant departments.

Dedicated 24-hour hotline set up for foreign domestic helpers

The Labour Department (LD) has set up a dedicated hotline to provide

support for foreign domestic helpers (FDHs) starting from today (December 19). The hotline number is 2157 9537.

The hotline provides one-stop support services to FDHs, including:

(1) providing advice to FDHs on their employment rights and obligations under the Standard Employment Contract and relevant labour laws;

(2) referring any enquiries, requests for services or assistance and complaints on relevant labour matters, such as employment claims or complaints against employment agencies, to the relevant divisions of the LD for follow-up and/or investigation; and

(3) advising FDHs on the appropriate law enforcement agencies to which they can file enquiries, requests for services or assistance and complaints involving suspected exploitation or physical abuse.

The hotline is manned by operators of the 1823 hotline service who are conversant in Cantonese, English and Putonghua and which operates 24 hours a day. An interpretation service in seven languages (namely Tagalog, Bahasa Indonesia, Thai, Nepali, Hindi, Punjabi and Urdu) is available from 8am to 10pm, Monday to Sunday (excluding public holidays).

Apart from calling the hotline, FDHs can also make enquiries about their employment matters in Hong Kong and file complaints when their employment rights are infringed through the dedicated FDH email account (fdh@labour.gov.hk) and the online form on the FDH Portal (www.fdh.labour.gov.hk) of the LD. To report a crime or during an emergency when one's personal safety is at risk, the FDH should immediately call 999 for help.

SFH to attend conference on inheritance and innovation of Chinese medicine in Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area

The Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, will lead a delegation to Shenzhen this afternoon (December 19) to attend a conference on inheritance and innovation of Chinese medicine in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, which will be held tomorrow (December 20).

The conference, organised by the Traditional Chinese Medicine Bureau of Guangdong Province, provides a platform for the leaders and the industry in

the field of Chinese medicine and the trade in Hong Kong, Macao and other cities in the Greater Bay Area to exchange views and share experience on policies, industry development and scientific research in relation to Chinese medicine. Professor Chan will deliver a speech at the opening ceremony of the conference tomorrow, and also participate in a roundtable meeting to discuss issues about the rapid rise of the Chinese medicine industry and the trade in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area with other leaders and guests attending the conference.

Professor Chan said, "Chinese medicine has been recognised as a crucial part of Hong Kong's healthcare system. As a city where East meets West, Hong Kong will capitalise on all of its unique strengths to foster the development of Chinese medicine benefiting from a robust healthcare system. We aim to develop the 'Hong Kong model' for promoting Chinese medicine overseas. Hong Kong will also actively take part in the implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative in the Chinese medicine field, further promote Chinese medicine services and realise inheritance and innovation of Chinese medicine in the new era."

The delegation, comprising representatives from the Food and Health Bureau, the Department of Health and the Hospital Authority, will return to Hong Kong tomorrow afternoon.

During Professor Chan's absence from Hong Kong, the Under Secretary for Food and Health, Dr Chui Tak-yi, will be the Acting Secretary for Food and Health.