

# Ombudsman probes into Civil Aviation Department's regulation of paragliding activities (with photo)

The following is issued on behalf of the Office of The Ombudsman:

The Ombudsman, Ms Winnie Chiu, today (March 18) announced the launch of a direct investigation to examine the Civil Aviation Department (CAD)'s regulation of paragliding activities.

In recent years, paragliding has been gaining popularity in Hong Kong. Incidents or accidents related to paragliding activities have happened from time to time. Last year, a paraglider collided with a vehicle when making an emergency landing on a public road. That accident has raised public concern about the safety of paragliding activities and whether the Government has in place adequate regulation for such activities.

At present, the CAD is empowered by two pieces of legislation to regulate paragliding activities. Pursuant to the Air Navigation (Hong Kong) Order 1995, any person who recklessly or negligently causes or permits an aircraft (including a paraglider) to endanger any other person or property is liable to prosecution. Moreover, it is an offence under the Air Transport (Licensing of Air Services) Regulations for any person to offer air services for hire or reward by paragliders except under a permit granted by the Director-General of Civil Aviation.

There are currently two major paragliding organisations in Hong Kong. The CAD maintains close liaison with them and proactively provides safety advice on paragliding activities. Should there occur any incident or accident in relation to paragliding activities, one of the paragliding organisations will investigate and submit a report to the CAD.

The Office of The Ombudsman's preliminary inquiry has revealed that no application for the permit to operate services for hire or reward by paragliders was made to the CAD between 2017 and 2019. The CAD received four applications in 2020, and its website shows that as at end of February 2021, two valid permits have been granted. To date, no prosecution has been initiated for any offence under the relevant legislation. Meanwhile, the Internet abounds with promotions and accounts on the experiences of fee-charging paragliding courses or taster flying sessions available locally.

Ms Chiu said, "Paragliding activities entail a certain level of safety risk. Improper operation of paragliders may not only impact on the safety of airspace in Hong Kong, but may also pose a danger to the public on the ground. The CAD is the department responsible for promoting and managing aviation safety. It is incumbent upon the CAD to ensure proper regulation of paragliding activities and to follow up on suspected improper or illegal paragliding activities to help ensure public safety. In this connection, I

have decided to initiate this direct investigation to probe whether the CAD has effectively regulated paragliding activities and taken adequate follow-up actions."

The Ombudsman welcomes views from members of the public on this topic. Written submissions should reach the Office of The Ombudsman by April 18, 2021:

Address: 30/F, China Merchants Tower, Shun Tak Centre  
168-200 Connaught Road Central, Hong Kong

Fax: 2882 8149

Email: [complaints@ombudsman.hk](mailto:complaints@ombudsman.hk)



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## [Ombudsman probes Government's control of illicit fuelling activities \(with photo\)](#)

The following is issued on behalf of the Office of The Ombudsman:

The Ombudsman, Ms Winnie Chiu, today (March 18) announced the launch of a direct investigation to examine the Government's control of illicit fuelling activities.

There are occasional media reports about the prevalence of illicit fuelling activities in Hong Kong. Such illegal operations (commonly known as "illegal fuel filling stations") have been found in various districts, and some of them are close to residential neighbourhoods. In the absence of any fire protection and firefighting equipment at those stations, illicit fuelling activities are potential threats to public safety.

The Office of The Ombudsman is aware that most of the illegal fuel filling stations are selling Euro V diesel, which has been on the duty-free list since 2008. As Euro V diesel is not dutiable, oversight of the fuel sold at those illegal fuel filling stations is not within the ambit of the Customs and Excise Department. Currently, the task to combat illicit fuelling

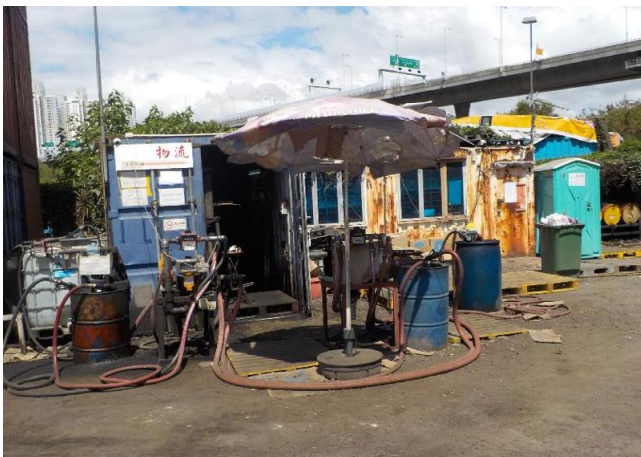
activities falls upon the Fire Services Department (FSD), which is responsible for fire prevention and firefighting.

The FSD's Anti-illicit Fuelling Activities Task Force was established in early 2015 to take enforcement action against the aforesaid illicit activities pursuant to the Dangerous Goods Ordinance, the Dangerous Goods (General) Regulations and the Fire Services (Fire Hazard Abatement) Regulation. Nevertheless, there have been public views that the FSD's control over the illicit activities is not effective, as the problem of illegal fuel filling stations has remained.

Ms Chiu said, "Operation of illegal fuel filling stations has been a long-standing problem. As these illegal stations usually do not have any fire protection and firefighting equipment, and some may be located close to residential neighbourhoods, if a fire were to break out, the operators and customers may face imminent danger and the safety of passers-by and residents would also be threatened. In view of this, we have decided to initiate a direct investigation to probe into the Government's control of illicit fuelling activities and make recommendations for improvement to the Government accordingly."

The Ombudsman now invites members of the public and concern groups to provide information and views on this topic. Written submissions should reach the Office of The Ombudsman by April 18, 2021:

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**[CEDB's internship programmes for youth](#)**

## achieving good progress

Five more international chambers of commerce in Hong Kong will join the Future International Talent (FIT) programme organised by the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau (CEDB) and are ready to provide more job opportunities for young people apart from the six existing partner chambers.

The five newly-joined chambers of commerce are the Italian Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong and Macao, the Dutch Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong, the Swiss Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong, the Australian Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong and the American Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong.

In January this year, the CEDB launched the FIT programme and another internship programme, the Telecommunications Opportunities Programme (TOP), in collaboration with six international chambers of commerce in Hong Kong and the Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups (HKFYG) respectively to create full-time entry-level job opportunities for young people in the creative industries and telecommunications sectors. Under the two programmes, the Government provides monthly salary subsidies under the Job Creation Scheme funded by the Anti-epidemic Fund at \$5,610 per fresh graduate or to-be graduate with no work experience and \$10,000 for young people with no more than five years of work experience, for a maximum of 12 months.

"FIT and TOP provide much-needed job opportunities for our young people at this difficult time, offering them global perspectives and wider exposure through work. Thanks to the support and collaboration of the participating partner chambers and the HKFYG, the two programmes are proceeding well and making very good progress," the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Edward Yau, said today (March 18).

"I am delighted to have five new partner chambers on board for FIT. I am confident that their comprehensive networks and knowledge of the trade will add to the success of the programme," he said.

At present, 92 member companies of the existing partner chambers (viz. the British Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong; the Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong; the French Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Hong Kong; the German Chamber of Commerce, Hong Kong; the Hong Kong Japanese Chamber of Commerce & Industry; and the Swedish Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong) have offered a total of 160 job and internship positions. The companies concerned are now preparing for their respective recruitment exercises. For the new participating chambers, the CEDB has opened a second round of applications for their member companies ending on March 31 with a view to announcing the results by mid-April 2021 and commencing recruitment thereafter.

The TOP programme is also achieving good progress since its launch. With the smooth execution by the HKFYG and support from over ten telecommunications-related companies, some 120 job vacancies in the

telecommunications sector have been created so far. The participating companies are now conducting recruitment exercises and interns are expected to commence work from April 2021.

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## **Key statistics on service demand of A&E Departments and occupancy rates in public hospitals**

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

During the winter surge, the Hospital Authority is closely monitoring the service demand of Accident and Emergency Departments and the occupancy rates in public hospitals. Key service statistics are being issued daily for public information. Details are in the appended table.

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## **Government enforces “restriction-testing declaration” and compulsory testing notice in respect of specified “restricted area” in Causeway Bay**

The Government yesterday (March 17) exercised the power under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap. 599J) to make a "restriction-testing declaration" effective from 8pm yesterday, under which people (hereafter referred to as "persons subject to compulsory testing") within the specified "restricted area" in Causeway Bay (i.e. Hoi Kung Court, 264-268 Gloucester Road, and Hoi To Court, 271-275 Gloucester Road, Causeway Bay) are required to stay in their premises and undergo compulsory testing. Persons subject to compulsory testing are required to stay in their premises until all such persons identified in the area have undergone testing and the test results are mostly ascertained. In addition, the Government had issued a compulsory testing notice yesterday to any person who had been present at the buildings for more than two hours from March 4 to 17, 2021, to undergo compulsory testing on or before March 19 even if they were not present in the "restricted area" at the time when the declaration took effect. The Government finished the compulsory testing exercise at around 8am today (March 18) and is now carrying out enforcement

actions in the "restricted area" to verify that all people in the "restricted area" have undergone compulsory testing. The Government will further announce the revocation time of the declaration.

Starting from around 8am today, persons in the "restricted area" in Causeway Bay who have undergone testing and are able to present SMS notifications with negative test results or wear wristbands as proof of having undergone testing may leave the "restricted area" through the designated exit after providing personal information to a prescribed officer.

The Government set up temporary specimen collection stations in the "restricted area" yesterday and requested persons subject to compulsory testing to collect combined nasal and throat swab samples at the stations to undergo a COVID-19 virus test before 1am today. As at 1am today, around 630 residents had undergone testing. Recollection of specimen is required for one of them.

Moreover, the Government also assigned staff to visit around 250 households, around 60 households did not answer the door. Those include some households with confirmed case or undergoing quarantine. Some units are possibly vacant as well. The Government does not have detailed information in this respect and will take measures to follow up.

The Government also understands that some residents already underwent testing at the mobile specimen collection stations set up in the district or by other means. Therefore, persons in the "restricted area" who have undergone testing from March 15 to 17, 2021, and are able to provide the SMS notification through mobile phone or related certification containing the test results, are not required to take the test again.

The Government reiterates that enforcement actions will be taken seriously. Any person who fails to present an SMS notification with a negative test result or wear a wristband as proof of having undergone testing breaches the compulsory testing notice and may be liable to a fine of \$5,000. The person will also be issued with a compulsory testing order, requiring him/her to undergo testing within a specified time frame. Failure to comply with the compulsory testing order or the "restriction-testing declaration" is an offence and the offender may be liable to a fine of level 4 (\$25,000) and imprisonment for six months.