

Toy shop owner convicted of engaging in commercial practices involving misleading omission

A toy shop owner was sentenced to carry out 150 hours of community service by Eastern Magistrates' Courts today (December 23) following earlier conviction for engaging in commercial practices involving misleading omission in the course of selling toy models, in contravention of the Trade Descriptions Ordinance (TDO). He was also ordered to offer a total of \$1,200 in compensation to the victim involved and to pay court costs of \$500.

Hong Kong Customs earlier received information alleging that a toy shop owner had engaged in unfair trade practices in the sale of toy models through a social media platform page.

An investigation revealed that the owner sold five types of toy models through the page and claimed that the goods were in stock but did not reveal the inventory status of the goods to the consumers. Eventually the owner failed to provide the relevant goods to the consumers after receiving initial payment.

Customs reminds traders to comply with the requirements of the TDO, and consumers to procure products at reputable shops.

Under the TDO, any trader who engages in a commercial practice that omits or hides material information or provides material information in a manner that is unclear, unintelligible, ambiguous or untimely, or fails to identify its commercial intent and as a result causes, or is likely to cause, an average consumer to make a transactional decision 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 violations of the TDO to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk).

Service arrangements of Public Records Office of Government Records Service

In view of the latest epidemic situation and the extension of special work arrangements for government employees, the Government Records Service (GRS) announced today (December 23) that from December 24 to January 6, 2021,

the Search Room of the Public Records Office (PRO) will only open on Wednesdays (December 30 and January 6, 2021) from 9am to 5.45pm to provide services for members of the public who have made reservations for holdings through the online catalogue. The quota is seven users per day, which will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. Services will be limited to:

1. Loan and circulation service for reserved holdings; and
2. Self-service reproduction of holdings.

The above services will be suspended for those who have not made an online reservation for holdings. Members of the public are required to wear masks at all times when they are inside the Hong Kong Public Records Building, and follow the infection control measures implemented by the GRS, including temperature checks upon entering the building and applying hand sanitiser.

The Exhibition Hall in the Hong Kong Public Records Building will be temporarily closed. Visits and public education programmes will continue to be suspended until further notice.

The above measures will be implemented until January 6, 2021, and will be reviewed then. Please visit the GRS website (www.grs.gov.hk) or the PRO Facebook page (www.facebook.com/grs.publicrecordsoffice) for the latest updates. For enquiries, please email proinfo@grs.gov.hk.

Fourth-term Commission on Poverty convenes second meeting

The Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, chaired the second meeting of the fourth-term Commission on Poverty (CoP) held online this afternoon (December 23).

Members noted the implementation progress of various assistance programmes and the financial position of the Community Care Fund (CCF). The CoP endorsed a proposal to introduce new drugs/clinical indications under a medical assistance programme and revision of the 2020-21 annual indicative budget for that assistance programme, the proposed indicative budgets for three CCF medical assistance programmes for 2021-22, and the extension of two existing assistance programmes. Details of the resolutions are as follows:

(1) The CoP agreed to introduce three new self-financed cancer drugs to the coverage of the First Phase Programme of Medical Assistance Programmes (First Phase Programme) with effect from the fourth quarter of 2020, including Inotuzumab ozogamicin, Abemaciclib and Atezolizumab. It is expected to

benefit 520 patients in the first 12 months of implementation. The CoP also agreed to add new indications for the existing drug Nivolumab and relax the clinical guidelines of Ixazomib and Lenalidomide. Having considered the expected increase in financial requirements for the existing drugs and the additional subsidy incurred in this operation year for the proposed introduction of new drugs/clinical indications and relaxation of clinical guidelines of existing drugs in the fourth quarter of 2020, the CoP agreed to uplift the 2020-21 indicative budget for the approved subsidy for the First Phase Programme from \$725 million to \$893 million. The approved administrative fee in the original budget remains unchanged.

(2) The CoP approved the proposed indicative budgets for three CCF medical assistance programmes for 2021-22, including the First Phase Programme, the "Subsidy for Eligible Patients to Purchase Ultra-expensive Drugs (Including Those for Treating Uncommon Disorders)" Programme and the "Subsidy for Eligible Patients of Hospital Authority to Purchase Specified Implantable Medical Devices for Interventional Procedures" Programme. Their indicative budgets are \$1,447.95 million, \$318.15 million and \$52.5 million respectively.

(3) The CoP agreed to extend the "Subsidy for Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Recipients Living in Rented Private Housing" Programme (the Programme) for six months until end-April 2021. The Programme provides a one-off subsidy to CSSA recipients living in rented private housing and paying a rent, which exceeded the maximum rent allowance under the CSSA to relieve their financial burden as a result of periodic increases in rent. Eligible CSSA households are not required to submit applications. The Social Welfare Department (SWD) will identify eligible households based on their reported rental records in the Computerised Society Security System as at July 31, 2020. The subsidy under the extended Programme is expected to commence disbursement progressively starting from end-January 2021 at the earliest. The original funding provision of the Programme was \$197.1 million and the revised budget is \$230.87 million, with an additional funding provision of \$33.77 million. It is expected to benefit 13 000 households.

(4) The CoP agreed to extend the "Pilot Scheme on Support for Elderly Persons Discharged from Public Hospitals after Treatment" (Pilot Scheme) until end-September 2023 under a new mode of operation starting from October 1, 2021. Launched in February 2018, the Pilot Scheme adopts a "medical-social collaboration" model under which the Hospital Authority (HA) conducts an assessment and refers persons aged 60 or above who are in need of transitional services (except for elderly persons covered by the existing "Integrated Discharge Support Programme for Elderly Patients") to the Pilot Scheme, which will provide them with transitional services for not more than six months. The SWD has set up a Discharge Support Team, consisting mainly of social workers, to follow up on all cases under the Pilot Scheme. Under the new mode of operation, the SWD will select three suitable non-government organisations through invitation for proposals to set up a transitional care team each in Kowloon East, New Territories East and New Territories West. Working directly with the medical staff of relevant HA clusters, the teams will formulate appropriate nursing, rehabilitation and care support plans for

elderly persons discharged from hospitals, and provide transitional residential care and/or community care and support services for four months. In case an individual elderly person is assessed by a medical staff of the HA to be in need of transitional care services for over four months, the transitional care team can initiate an application to the SWD for consideration. The revised funding provision of the Pilot Scheme is \$234.18 million, with an additional provision of \$8.28 million.

The CoP was also briefed on the poverty statistics and analysis for 2019 produced jointly by the Office of the Government Economist and the Census and Statistics Department. The CoP discussed the analysis and noted that the Government would publish the "Hong Kong Poverty Situation Report 2019" (the Report) after the meeting. The Report has been uploaded to the CoP's dedicated website (www.povertyrelief.gov.hk).

[Housing Authority receives more than 400 applications under subsidy scheme for promotion of contactless payment in its markets](#)

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Housing Authority:

The Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) announced today (December 23) that more than 400 applications were received from its market and cooked food stall tenants for the subsidy scheme for promoting contactless payment in public markets under the third round of the Anti-epidemic Fund.

The application period for the scheme ended on December 21, and the HA received a total of about 440 applications. Applicants have to submit the relevant contracts and complete the installation of the contactless payment devices by January 20, 2021. The HA will disburse the subsidy of \$5,000 to every eligible tenant as soon as practicable after inspections are conducted to confirm completion of the installation work.

"With the receipt of over 400 applications, together with the market stalls that have already installed contactless payment means, it is estimated that about 30 per cent of the market stalls and cooked food stalls under the HA could provide contactless payment means to customers," a spokesman for the HA said.

The subsidy scheme was launched on October 15 for the Government to provide a one-off subsidy to eligible stall tenants of the HA's markets and cooked food stalls at a flat rate of \$5,000 per stall to meet the initial

setting up costs as well as service and other fees in relation to the provision of at least one contactless payment means, with a view to reducing the risk of virus transmission in markets. The HA had extended the application deadline earlier to December 21.

"It is more convenient and hygienic to use contactless payment. We encourage other stall tenants to continue installing such payment means so as to reduce the risk of virus spread," the spokesman said.

With Christmas and New Year around the corner, the HA reminded the public of the importance of maintaining personal hygiene and epidemic prevention measures while visiting the HA's markets.

"The HA has also been implementing anti-epidemic measures in its markets. Patrons are required to wear a mask and undergo body temperature checks when entering the markets. Hand sanitisers have also been provided for patrons' use in the markets,

"The HA has stepped up cleaning and disinfection of the communal areas and facilities in the markets, including cleaning with diluted household bleach regularly every day. We also call on the stall operators to strengthen cleaning of their stalls to work with us together in combating the epidemic," the spokesman said.

[Continued increase in Hong Kong's gross expenditure on research and development in 2019](#)

According to the report "Hong Kong Innovation Activities Statistics 2019" released today (December 23) by the Census and Statistics Department, the gross domestic expenditure on research and development (GERD) of Hong Kong in 2019 amounted to \$26,333 million, representing an increase of 8 per cent compared with the corresponding figure in 2018. The GERD as a ratio to the Gross Domestic Product increased from 0.86 per cent in 2018 to 0.92 per cent in 2019.

A government spokesman said, "The Government is committed to promoting innovation and technology (I&T) development in Hong Kong. The current-term Government has committed over \$100 billion to build and enhance the local I&T ecosystem along the eight major areas set out by the Chief Executive in her 2017 Policy Address. It is encouraging to see that the GERD has recorded an increase of 8 per cent, in spite of the challenges presented in 2019."

The spokesman said that the Government has made good progress in

increasing resources for research and development, supporting technology enterprises, promoting technology application and re-industrialisation, as well as providing technological research infrastructure. Further measures to strengthen I&T development were announced in the 2020 Policy Address, including developing the Shenzhen/Hong Kong Innovation and Technology Co-operation Zone (which comprises the Shenzhen Innovation and Technology Zone and the Hong Kong-Shenzhen Innovation and Technology Park at the Lok Ma Chau Loop) and introducing the Global STEM Professorship Scheme.

"The Government will continue to improve the local I&T ecosystem. The Steering Committee on Innovation and Technology, established and chaired by the Chief Executive, monitors regularly the implementation of the above measures as well as other initiatives under the Government's eight major areas to develop I&T. We expect the effect of these measures to be realised gradually in subsequent years, contributing to a further increase in the GERD," the spokesman said.