

AFCD seizes suspected ivory products (with photo)

The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) yesterday (June 5) seized 50 pieces of suspected elephant ivory products from a shop in Yau Tsim Mong District.

The AFCD received a complaint alleging that a shop in Yau Tsim Mong District was suspected to be offering scheduled elephant ivory for sale illegally. Staff were immediately sent to inspect the shop concerned. A total of 50 pieces of suspected elephant ivory items were found on the premises and they were seized for further investigation.

A spokesman for the AFCD said, "The Government is committed to the protection of endangered species, including elephants. Since December 31, 2021, the import, re-export and commercial possession of elephant ivory (except for 'antique elephant ivory') have been banned. The AFCD has stepped up inspection efforts, and will remain in close contact with relevant government departments including the Customs and Excise Department to combat smuggling and the illegal trade of ivory."

The spokesman added, "'Commercial purposes' as defined under the Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance (Cap. 586), is not limited to sale. Enticing customers with free ivory or displaying ivory labelled as 'not for sale' in a shop may also contravene the Ordinance. To avoid inadvertent breaching of the law, ivory shall not be displayed on commercial premises."

According to the Ordinance, "commercial purposes" means:

- (1) a purpose relating to trade or business; or
- (2) a purpose of obtaining profit or other economic benefit (whether in cash or in kind) and directed towards sale, resale, exchange, provision of a service or other form of economic use or benefit, whether direct or indirect.

According to the Ordinance, "antique elephant ivory" means:

- (1) a piece of elephant ivory that was, before July 1, 1925:
 - (i) removed from the wild;
 - (ii) significantly altered from its natural state for jewellery, adornment, art, utility or musical instruments; and
 - (iii) acquired by a person after the alteration in such altered state that required no further carving, crafting or processing to effect its purpose; and
- (2) does not include an elephant hunting trophy.

Traders possessing "antique elephant ivory" for commercial purposes must prove that the ivory meets the above-mentioned definition of "antique elephant ivory". Examples of acceptable proof of "antique elephant ivory"

include a qualified appraisal or scientifically approved aging methods carried out by an accredited laboratory or facility.

Any person importing, re-exporting or possessing elephant ivory not in accordance with the Ordinance will be liable to a maximum fine of \$10 million and imprisonment for 10 years upon conviction. The specimens will also be forfeited.

