

HAD steps up enforcement actions against unlicensed guesthouses during Labour Day holidays (with photos)

In response to the Labour Day holidays, the Office of the Licensing Authority (OLA) of the Home Affairs Department (HAD) stepped up enforcement actions against unlicensed guesthouses from late April to early May by conducting day and night surprise inspections and decoy operations at tourist accommodation hotspots. The HAD also launched large-scale inter-departmental joint operations during the holidays to combat unlicensed guesthouses and ensure the safety of lodgers as well as the general public.

A spokesman for the HAD today (May 10) said, "The OLA inspected a total of 246 premises in Hong Kong Island, Kowloon and the New Territories in the operations. Prosecution will be instituted by the OLA immediately if there is sufficient evidence that the premises concerned are involved in the operation of unlicensed guesthouses. OLA officers also visited a number of private residential estates and buildings, and posted advisory notices in the common areas of the buildings to alert visitors that there were no licensed guesthouses in those buildings. OLA officers also distributed leaflets to appeal to residents to provide information about suspected unlicensed guesthouses to the OLA."

Having regard to unlicensed guesthouses soliciting lodgers via online platforms, the OLA has strengthened its intelligence collection by forming a dedicated team to browse web pages, mobile applications, social media, discussion fora, blogs, etc, to track down suspected unlicensed guesthouse activities. The OLA's law enforcement officers will initiate follow-up investigation when information on unlicensed guesthouses is found.

The spokesman stressed, "Operating an unlicensed guesthouse is a criminal offence and it can lead to imprisonment as well as a criminal record. Upon conviction, an offender is liable to a maximum fine of \$200,000, two years' imprisonment and a fine of \$20,000 for each day during which the offence continues. In 2018, the OLA conducted over 15 250 inspections and instigated 159 prosecutions, among which 140 were convicted so far, including 37 cases solicited via online platforms."

Apart from conducting special operations during festive seasons, the OLA continues to combat unlicensed guesthouses held out via online platforms through public education, such as broadcasting Announcements in the Public Interest on TV and radio. Starting from the end of March this year, the OLA also conducted publicity through major Internet search engines on the Mainland and overseas to facilitate tourists' access to the information provided by the OLA in the course of planning their trips, so that they can make use of the search functions on OLA's website to distinguish whether the guesthouse reserved is licensed or not.

Tourists and members of the public should report any suspected unlicensed guesthouses to the OLA by the hotline (Tel: 2881 7498), by email (hadlaeng@had.gov.hk), by fax (2504 5805), or through the mobile application "Hong Kong Licensed Hotels and Guesthouses".



[Employer fined for violation of safety legislation](#)

The Scout Association of Hong Kong was fined \$20,000 at Shatin Magistrates' Courts today (May 10) for violation of the Occupational Safety and Health Ordinance. The prosecution was launched by the Labour Department.

The case involved a fatal accident that occurred on August 26, 2018 at a single-storey hostel at a scout activity centre in Tai Po. A worker fell from a foldable wooden ladder to the ground while he was carrying out air-conditioner replacement work at the hostel. He was admitted to hospital but passed away the following day.

[Progress in handling of banking complaints by HKMA](#)

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

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) announced today (May 10) the progress made in its handling of banking complaints received as at end-April 2019. Banking complaints include cases concerning general banking services and conduct-related issues.

In April 2019, 169 cases were received and the handling of 177 cases was completed. As at end-April, the handling of 437 cases was in progress.

A table summarising the progress made in the handling of banking complaints by the HKMA is attached.

[Transcript of remarks by STH](#)

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, at a media session after attending the public hearing of the Legislative Council Public Accounts Committee (PAC) today (May 10):

Reporter: Secretary, I'll ask two questions. First of all, is the Government considering a series of measures to tighten the sale of first-hand properties? And secondly, just now in the PAC meeting some lawmakers questioned why the Government didn't do anything about the shortage of parking spaces in 2014 when the ratio fell to 1:1.19. Can you tell us why?

Secretary for Transport and Housing: As regard the sale of first-hand residential property, as you may realise, the Sales of First-hand Residential Properties Authority has tightened its supervision of the sale of first-hand residential property in terms of information availability, transparency, and

is also trying to make sure that the sales and purchase process is transparent and fair to those who are going to buy properties. We are going to keep a very close watch to the market on what is going on, and make sure that property buyers will be treated fairly and squarely.

As I have explained in the PAC meeting (public hearing of the Legislative Council PAC) this morning, we have been making every endeavour to enhance the supply of car parks, mostly for commercial vehicles. If there is availability of space and flexibility, we'll also enhance the supply of private car parking spaces as well. As regard to what has been done in the past, I think we have explained very clearly in the hearing. What we are now focusing on is how to enhance the supply in future and I have explained very clearly the measures that we are going to take in the years to come.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)

[Hong Kong Customs tackles case of suspected false trade descriptions under civil compliance-based mechanism](#)

The Customs and Excise Department (C&ED), after obtaining consent of the Secretary for Justice, has accepted written undertakings made under the civil compliance-based mechanism of the Trade Descriptions Ordinance (TDO) by a skincare product importer and a beauty centre suspected of applying false trade descriptions to goods and supplying goods with false trade descriptions in the course of trade.

The C&ED earlier received a complaint against a beauty centre for supplying a skincare product with a suspected false organic authentication logo. After investigation, it was confirmed that the beauty centre procured from an importer the skincare product with the relevant logo without authorisation.

The traders were co-operative in the course of the investigation and proposed to undertake in writing not to continue or repeat the conduct and will take remedial actions. Having fully assessed the traders' proposals, the C&ED accepted the undertaking for a period of two years under the TDO upon obtaining the consent from the Secretary for Justice. The C&ED today (May 10) uploaded the undertaking to the Customs homepage (www.customs.gov.hk/en/customs_notices/undertake/index.html).

A C&ED spokesman stressed that if the trader breaches any terms of the undertaking, the C&ED might withdraw the acceptance of the undertaking pursuant to the TDO, to be followed by investigation and legal proceedings.

Under the TD0, any person who supplies goods with a false trade description in the course of trade or business, or is in possession of any goods for sale with a false trade description, commits an offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$500,000 and imprisonment for five years.

Under Section 30L of the TD0, a civil compliance-based mechanism has been put in place to encourage compliance by traders and to settle matters concerned expeditiously. The C&ED, having regard to the nature, actual circumstances of the case and relevant factors, may accept an undertaking from the traders involved after obtaining written consent from the Secretary for Justice.

Members of the public may report any suspected violations of the TD0 to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk).