

[Hong Kong Customs seizes suspected Dalbergia species wood logs \(with photo\)](#)

Hong Kong Customs yesterday (April 16) seized about 54 200 kilograms of suspected Dalbergia species wood logs (rosewood) from two containers at the Kwai Chung Customhouse Cargo Examination Compound. The estimated market value of the seizure was about \$2.2 million.

Through risk assessment, Customs officers inspected two containers arriving in Hong Kong from Honduras. Upon inspection, Customs officers found the wood logs in the containers.

The case was handed over to the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department for follow-up investigation.

Under the Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance, any person found guilty of importing or exporting an endangered species without a licence is liable to a maximum fine of \$10 million and imprisonment for 10 years.

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



[Effective Exchange Rate Index](#)

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Wednesday, April 17, 2019 is 103.2 (down 0.2 against yesterday's index).

S for S speaks on Fugitive Offenders and Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Legislation (Amendment) Bill 2019

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for Security, Mr John Lee, at a media session after the Bills Committee on Fugitive Offenders and Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Legislation (Amendment) Bill 2019 meeting at the Legislative Council (LegCo) today (April 17):

Reporter: (About the urgency of the amendment bill.)

Secretary for Security: I am extremely disappointed and I regret that it has taken two hours for the Bills Committee to hold the meeting without even appointing a chairman. In my memory, it has not happened before. The Government is very serious about this proposal because there is an urgency of this matter. We all know that the suspect of the Taiwan murder case has pleaded guilty to the charges of money laundering in Hong Kong and the court will mention the case again on the 29th of this month. We have to deal with the real fact at the present moment we have no legal basis to deal with this suspect for the Taiwan murder case. So we urge every member of the Bills Committee to allow a rational discussion at the Bills Committee, so that views will be heard and explanations can be given for the final decision by LegCo.

We now lack the law and also lack a practicable solution to deal with similar serious cases which can happen at any time, at any place, to any victim in a jurisdiction which is beyond the 20 countries with which we have signed (long-term) agreements. So the urgency of the matter really requires every one of us to treat this urgently, so that we can have a final solution to deal with the two very important matters that I have just mentioned.

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

Public invited to share the joy of reading beyond boundaries

To tie in with World Book Day, the Hong Kong Public Libraries (HKPL) of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department will once again hold the

"Discover and Share the Joy of Reading" campaign this year. A series of vibrant activities will commence in April to foster a reading culture.

In celebration of World Book Day on April 23, the HKPL will hold the launching ceremony of "Reading Beyond Boundaries on 23 April" at the Hong Kong Central Library (HKCL) to announce this year's highlight reading events. The HKPL, Shenzhen Library, the Sun Yat-sen Library of Guangdong Province and the Macao Public Library will hold the event "30-minute Read" simultaneously in which readers from the three places will be able to enjoy reading together. In addition, storytelling workshops for children will be held at 34 public libraries.

Pop-up libraries have become increasingly popular since their first appearance last year. Through reading corners and fun-filled activities in various districts, readers can experience extraordinary library services. The coming pop-up library will appear at SKH Holy Trinity Church Secondary School on April 27 at "2019 World Book Day Fest: Towards a Reading City – Folktaleoscope" co-organised by the Standing Committee on Language Education and Research (SCOLAR) and the Education Bureau. Primary and secondary school students, parents and teachers will be able to learn more about the collections, services and information of public libraries. Details of the Fest have been uploaded to the SCOLAR website (scolarkh.edb.hkedcity.net).

Organised annually by the HKPL, the 4.23 World Book Day Creative Competition encourages primary and secondary students to read and share their reading experiences in different forms. The theme this year is "Let's Share the Joy of Reading". Winners will be awarded at the prize presentation ceremony on April 28, while their winning entries will be displayed at the HKCL and libraries in various districts from April 29.

The outreach paired reading activity "Fun Reading at Hong Kong Public Transportation" will be held from April to July. Participants can read transportation-themed picture books, learn more about the city development and experience the fun of reading. The launch ceremony will take place at Whitty Street Tram Depot in Sai Wan on April 28, with the first tram-themed session to be held immediately afterwards. More themed sessions featuring buses, railways and boats will be rolled out soon.

With the support of the District Councils, the HKPL organises a series of cultural and reading activities with district features to promote reading awareness in the community under the theme "Share the Joy of Reading at 18 Districts". "Happy Reading Companion Road Show" of Southern District and the STEM@Library Fun Day of Kowloon City District will be held in April. Activities of other districts including Yuen Long District and Sham Shui Po District will be launched later.

To cultivate a reading habit, the HKPL will present more activities in the second half of 2019. The large-scale children's reading event "Summer Reading Fiesta" will be held again. Children can spend their summer visiting libraries in different districts to discover the joy of reading.

Details of the colourful activities are available on the HKPL's website (www.hkpl.gov.hk) and its newly launched "Reading is Joyful" Facebook page (www.facebook.com/readingisjoyful) and Instagram page (www.instagram.com/readingisjoyful).

LCQ21: Issuance of Hong Kong full driving licences and International Driving Permits

Following is a question by the Hon Andrew Wan and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (April 17):

Question:

Under the existing policy, holders of a Mainland driving licence may be issued a Hong Kong full driving licence directly without test, and Hong Kong residents holding a Hong Kong full driving licence may be issued an International Driving Permit (IDP). It was reported that a Chinese person holding an IDP issued by the Hong Kong authority had caused, due to inability to read the road signs in English, a traffic accident while driving in Australia on December 26, 2017, killing one person and injuring another. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the respective numbers of persons issued with a Hong Kong full driving licence without test in each of the past 10 years who were holders of (i) a Mainland driving licence and (ii) a foreign driving licence;

(2) of the number of persons issued with an IDP in each of the past 10 years and, among them, the number of those who were persons mentioned in (1)(i); and

(3) whether it will tighten the arrangement whereby a person issued with a Hong Kong full driving licence without test may obtain an IDP; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Under regulation 11(3) of the Road Traffic (Driving Licences) Regulations (Cap. 374B), the mechanism of "direct issue of Hong Kong full driving licence" allows a person holding an overseas driving licence issued by a "recognised country or place" to be directly issued with a Hong Kong full driving licence without taking a local driving test, for driving private

cars, light goods vehicles, motor cycles and motor tricycles. As specified in the Fourth Schedule to the Regulations, there are 32 "recognised countries or places", including Mainland China (see Annex for details).

Pursuant to the Regulations, an applicant for direct issue of Hong Kong full driving licence must hold a driving licence, sometime within three years before the date of application, issued by a competent authority in any country or place listed in the Fourth Schedule of the Regulations authorising the applicant to drive vehicles of the class under application after successful completion of a test of competence at the country or place. Moreover, the applicant must meet one of the following requirements: (i) the applicant was issued with the original licence during a period of residence of not less than six months in the country or place of issue; (ii) the applicant was issued with the original licence not less than five years immediately prior to the application; or (iii) the applicant is the holder of a passport or other equivalent travel document issued in the country or place in which the original licence was issued.

An International Driving Permit (IDP) is issued in accordance with the Regulations and the 1949 Convention on Road Traffic. Pursuant to regulation 36(1) and (2) of the Regulations, an applicant for IDP must be a holder of a full Hong Kong driving licence and a resident in Hong Kong, as well as meeting the corresponding age requirement.

My reply to the three parts of the Hon Andrew Wan's question is as follows:

(1) The number of applications for direct issue of Hong Kong full driving licences by the Transport Department (TD) on the basis of a Mainland driving licence or non-Mainland driving licence over the past ten years is set out in the table below:

Year	Number of Applications for Direct Issue of Hong Kong Full Driving Licence	
	On the basis of Mainland Driving Licence	On the basis of Non-Mainland Driving Licence
2009	13 655	14 720
2010	16 289	14 452
2011	19 675	14 981
2012	22 203	14 762
2013	24 810	13 204
2014	34 949	12 459
2015	37 680	12 187
2016	35 261	11 424

2017	35 765	11 834
2018	37 897	11 523

(2) The number of IDPs issued by the TD, and the number of applicants issued with IDPs by way of holding a Hong Kong driving licence issued directly by the TD on the basis of a Mainland driving licence, over the past ten years are set out in the table below:

Year	Number of IDPs issued	Number of applicants issued with IDPs by way of
2009	79 329	583
2010	91 766	779
2011	93 603	1 159
2012	111 532	1 800
2013	146 194	3 008
2014	175 794	4 092
2015	225 424	5 612
2016	253 725	6 307
2017	293 656	7 093
2018	315 458	7 694

Note: The figures cover Hong Kong driving licences in which the licences for all applicable vehicle classes, or at least the licence for one vehicle class, have been directly issued on the basis of Mainland driving licences.

(3) An applicant for direct issue of a Hong Kong full driving licence must fulfil the requirements stipulated in regulation 11(3) of the Regulations, including the requirement that the applicant's overseas or Mainland driving licence must have been obtained through passing of a comparable driving test held in the issuing country or place. Pursuant to regulation 36(1) and (2) of the Regulations, an applicant for an IDP must be a holder of a Hong Kong full driving licence. In other words, in case a holder of an IDP has obtained a driving licence by direct issue, he/she must have passed a relevant driving test overseas or in the Mainland. Since the above arrangements have been operating smoothly, we have no plan to make any changes at this stage.