

Over 200 organisations commended for supporting local recycling industry

The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) today (October 2) held the 8th Friends of EcoPark Award Presentation Ceremony to commend over 200 organisations from both the public and private sectors in recognition of their support for EcoPark tenants and to encourage further collaboration to enhance the development of the local recycling industry.

Speaking at the award presentation ceremony, the Secretary for the Environment, Mr Wong Kam-sing, said that the number of awardees this year had reached a record high. He thanked all the awardees for their support for the EcoPark tenants and the recycling industry. In addition to reducing waste at source, he said that upcycling is also a key component in the circular economy. With the Mainland's progressive tightening of import requirements on recyclables, it is of utmost importance to foster the sustainable development of the local recycling industry with support from various sectors of the community. Mr Wong appealed to the awardees to continue working with the recycling industry and encouraged more trade stakeholders to become "Friends of EcoPark".

Launched by the EPD in 2010, the Friends of EcoPark scheme aims at helping EcoPark tenants to extend their sourcing of recyclables and the collection network, and to promote their recycled products by fostering partnerships between the private and public sectors and EcoPark tenants. The number of participating companies and organisations is on an increasing trend, comprising a wide range of business groups such as hotels, catering, construction, logistics, retail, cleaning and property management, as well as various public utilities and organisations from the public sector.

The EPD will continue to encourage more partnership initiatives between enterprises and tenants through the scheme to promote the sustainable development of recycling operations. For more information about the Friends of EcoPark scheme or collaboration opportunities with EcoPark tenants, please visit the EcoPark's website at www.ecopark.com.hk or call its hotline on 2496 7633.

Also officiating at today's ceremony were the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Legislative Council Panel on Environmental Affairs, Ms Tanya Chan and Dr Junius Ho; the Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Recycling Fund, Mr Jimmy Kwok; and the Chairman of Tuen Mun District Council, Mr Leung Kin-man.

SCS visits Department of Health (with photo)

The Secretary for the Civil Service, Mr Joshua Law, today (October 2) visited the Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health and met with its management and staff of various grades to learn more about their work and exchange views on matters of concern.

Accompanied by the Permanent Secretary for the Civil Service, Mr Thomas Chow, Mr Law first met with the Director of Health, Dr Constance Chan, and directorate staff to get an update on the Department's work in safeguarding community health through promotional, preventive, curative and rehabilitative services, as well as the challenges confronting them.

Mr Law then toured the Central Notification Office and the Outbreak Teams under the Communicable Disease Division of the Surveillance and Epidemiology Branch. He was briefed by colleagues about their work in monitoring intelligence related to communicable diseases in Hong Kong collected through the notification mechanism, as well as work related to epidemiological investigation and control of communicable diseases.

Mr Law later proceeded to the Emergency Hotline Centre of the Public Health Nursing Division to learn more about its health related enquiry service during a public health emergency. He also visited the simulation ward of the Infection Control Branch, which was purpose-built for providing infection control training to health care professionals.

Before concluding his visit, Mr Law met with staff representatives of various grades at a tea gathering to exchange views on matters that concern them. He encouraged colleagues to continue maintaining vigilance and to always be prepared for a public health emergency so as to safeguard the health of Hong Kong people.



Two illegal workers jailed

Two illegal workers, comprising an Indian and a Vietnamese, were jailed by Shatin Magistrates' Courts on September 28 and 29.

During an anti-illegal worker operation mounted on July 24, Immigration Department (ImmD) investigators raided a restaurant in Tung Chung. One female Indian illegal worker, aged 28, was arrested. When intercepted, she was working as a waitress. Upon identity checking she produced for inspection a recognisance form issued by the ImmD, which prohibits her from taking employment. Further investigation revealed that she was a non-refoulement claimant. An employer suspected of employing the illegal worker was arrested and the investigation is ongoing.

Furthermore, ImmD investigators received a referral from the Hong Kong Police Force to further investigate an illegal employment case in September. Enforcement officers arrested a male Vietnamese worker, aged 28, who was found working as an odd-job worker in a recycling depot in Tin Shui Wai. Upon identity checking, he produced for inspection a recognisance form issued by the ImmD, which prohibits him from taking employment. Further investigation revealed that he was a non-refoulement claimant.

The two illegal workers were respectively charged at Shatin Magistrates' Courts on September 28 and 29 with taking employment after landing in Hong Kong unlawfully and remaining in Hong Kong without the authority of the Director of Immigration or while being a person in respect of whom a removal order or deportation order was in force. They pleaded guilty to the charge and were sentenced to 15 months and two weeks' and 15 months' imprisonment respectively. In addition, the male Vietnamese was also charged with remaining in Hong Kong without the authority of the Director and was sentenced to eight months and eighteen days' imprisonment. All sentences are to run concurrently, making a total of 15 months' imprisonment.

The ImmD spokesman warned that, as stipulated in section 38AA of the Immigration Ordinance, illegal immigrants or people who are the subject of a removal order or a deportation order are prohibited from taking any employment, whether paid or unpaid, or establishing or joining in any business. Offenders are liable upon conviction to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and up to three years' imprisonment. The Court of Appeal has issued a guideline ruling that a sentence of 15 months' imprisonment should be applied in such cases.

The spokesman reiterated that it is a serious offence to employ people who are not lawfully employable. The maximum penalty is imprisonment for three years and a fine of \$350,000. The High Court has laid down sentencing guidelines that the employer of an illegal worker should be given an immediate custodial sentence. According to the court sentencing, employers must take all practicable steps to determine whether a person is lawfully employable prior to employment. Apart from inspecting a prospective employee's identity card, the employer has the explicit duty to make

enquiries regarding the person and ensure that the answers would not cast any reasonable doubt concerning the lawful employability of the person. The court will not accept failure to do so as a defence in proceedings. It is also an offence if an employer fails to inspect the job seeker's valid travel document if the job seeker does not have a Hong Kong permanent identity card. The maximum penalty for failing to inspect such a document is imprisonment for one year and a fine of \$150,000.

Under the existing mechanism, the ImmD will, as a standard procedure, conduct initial screening on vulnerable persons, including illegal workers, illegal immigrants, sex workers and foreign domestic helpers, who are arrested during any operation, with a view to ascertaining whether they are trafficking in persons (TIP) victims. When any TIP indicator is revealed in the initial screening, the officers will conduct a full debriefing and identification by using a standardised checklist to ascertain the presence of TIP elements, such as threat and coercion in the recruitment phase and the nature of exploitation. Identified TIP victims will be provided with various forms of support and assistance, including urgent interference, medical services, counselling, shelter, temporary accommodation and other supporting services. The ImmD calls on TIP victims to report crimes to the relevant departments.

Provisional statistics of retail sales for August 2018

The Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) released the latest figures on retail sales today (October 2).

The value of total retail sales in August 2018, provisionally estimated at \$38.2 billion, increased by 9.5% over the same month in 2017. The revised estimate of the value of total retail sales in July 2018 increased by 7.8% over a year earlier. For the first eight months of 2018 taken together, it was provisionally estimated that the value of total retail sales increased by 12.2% over the same period in 2017.

After netting out the effect of price changes over the same period, the provisional estimate of the volume of total retail sales in August 2018 increased by 8.1% over a year earlier. The revised estimate of the volume of total retail sales in July 2018 increased by 5.9% over a year earlier. For the first eight months of 2018 taken together, the provisional estimate of the total retail sales increased by 10.6% in volume over the same period in 2017.

Analysed by broad type of retail outlet in descending order of the provisional estimate of the value of sales and comparing August 2018 with August 2017, the value of sales of jewellery, watches and clocks, and

valuable gifts increased by 21.6%. This was followed by sales of commodities in supermarkets (+0.3% in value); commodities in department stores (+11.7%); medicines and cosmetics (+16.3%); wearing apparel (+5.7%); food, alcoholic drinks and tobacco (+6.3%); other consumer goods, not elsewhere classified (+16.1%); motor vehicles and parts (+7.5%); fuels (+10.2%); footwear, allied products and other clothing accessories (+13.6%); furniture and fixtures (+5.5%); Chinese drugs and herbs (+9.3%); and optical shops (+2.8%).

On the other hand, the value of sales of electrical goods and other consumer durable goods, not elsewhere classified decreased by 3.5% in August 2018 compared with a year earlier. This was followed by sales of books, newspapers, stationery and gifts (-2.3% in value).

Based on the seasonally adjusted series, the provisional estimate of the value of total retail sales decreased by 1.6% in the three months ending August 2018 compared with the preceding three-month period, while the provisional estimate of the volume of total retail sales decreased by 1.9%.

These retail sales statistics measure the sales receipts in respect of goods sold by local retail establishments and are primarily intended for gauging the short-term business performance of the local retail sector. They cover consumer spending on goods but not on services (such as those on housing, catering, medical care and health services, transport and communication, financial services, education and entertainment) which account for over 50% of the overall consumer spending. Moreover, they include spending on goods in Hong Kong by visitors but exclude spending outside Hong Kong by Hong Kong residents. Hence they should not be regarded as indicators for measuring overall consumer spending.

Users interested in the trend of overall consumer spending should refer to the data series of private consumption expenditure (PCE), which is a major component of the Gross Domestic Product published at quarterly intervals. Compiled from a wide range of data sources, PCE covers consumer spending on both goods (including goods purchased from all channels) and services by Hong Kong residents whether locally or abroad. Please refer to the C&SD publication "Gross Domestic Product (Quarterly)" for more details.

Commentary

A government spokesman indicated that retail sales grew notably over a year earlier in August, buttressed by the solid local consumption demand and visible growth in visitor arrivals.

The spokesman commented further that, in the near term, favourable job and income conditions and sustained growth in inbound tourism should render support to the retail sector. The Government will closely monitor how consumer sentiment will be affected by the external headwinds in the period ahead.

Further information

Table 1 presents the revised figures on value index and value of retail

sales for all retail outlets and by broad type of retail outlet for July 2018 as well as the provisional figures for August 2018. The provisional figures on the value of retail sales for all retail outlets and by broad type of retail outlet as well as the corresponding year-on-year changes for the first eight months of 2018 taken together are also shown.

Table 2 presents the revised figures on volume index of retail sales for all retail outlets and by broad type of retail outlet for July 2018 as well as the provisional figures for August 2018. The provisional figures on year-on-year changes for the first eight months of 2018 taken together are also shown.

Table 3 shows the movements of the value and volume of total retail sales in terms of the year-on-year rate of change for a month compared with the same month in the preceding year based on the original series, and in terms of the rate of change for a three-month period compared with the preceding three-month period based on the seasonally adjusted series.

The classification of retail establishments follows the Hong Kong Standard Industrial Classification (HSIC) Version 2.0, which is used in various economic surveys for classifying economic units into different industry classes.

More detailed statistics are given in the "Report on Monthly Survey of Retail Sales". Users can download this publication free of charge at the website of the C&SD (www.censtatd.gov.hk/hkstat/sub/sp320.jsp?productCode=B1080003). Alternatively, the historical series of retail sales statistics can be downloaded in the form of a statistical table at the website of the C&SD (www.censtatd.gov.hk/hkstat/sub/sp320.jsp?productCode=D5600089).

Users who have enquiries about the survey results may contact the Distribution Services Statistics Section of the C&SD (Tel: 3903 7400; email: mrs@censtatd.gov.hk).

Hong Kong Customs seizes suspected endangered species (with photos)

Hong Kong Customs seized a batch of suspected endangered species including 881 live lizards, 39 live turtles and 36 live snakes with an estimated market value of about \$150,000 at Man Kam To Control Point on September 27.

Customs officers intercepted an outgoing lorry at Man Kam To Control Point for inspection in the afternoon on September 27 and seized the batch of suspected endangered species in the cargo compartment.

The 64-year-old male driver was arrested. Investigation is ongoing and the arrested man has been released on bail pending further investigation.

Smuggling is a serious offence. Under the Import and Export Ordinance, any person found guilty of importing or exporting unmanifested cargo is liable to a maximum fine of \$2 million and imprisonment for seven years.

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 ten years.

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).

