

LCQ18: Customs and Excise Department proactively combats various smuggling activities

Following is a question by the Hon Jimmy Ng and a written reply by the Secretary for Security, Mr John Lee, in the Legislative Council today (May 16):

Question:

According to the information of the Security Bureau, there has been an upward trend in smuggling activities by air in recent years. The number of such cases detected by the Customs and Excise Department increased from 4 141 in 2013 to 7 786 in 2017, representing a cumulative increase of nearly 90 per cent; and among them, the trend of increase was more apparent for cases of smuggling by means of air postal packets and express cargoes (with a rate of increase being 264 per cent), and the percentage of which in the total number of air smuggling cases also increased from 12 per cent in 2013 to 23 per cent in 2017. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of each type of air smuggling cases detected (including cases of bringing undeclared dutiable goods into Hong Kong as well as import or export of prohibited/controlled articles without the licences/certificates required by the law) in each of the past five years (i.e. from 2013 to 2017); and among the people engaged in such smuggling activities, of the respective percentages of individual travellers and members of organised crime syndicates;

(2) given that the rapid development of e-commerce in recent years has made it increasingly convenient and inexpensive for smugglers to transport illicit articles by means of air postal packets and express cargoes, of the targeted measures, on the premise of striking a balance between facilitating e-commerce and curbing smuggling activities, to be adopted by the authorities for eradicating such smuggling activities; whether the authorities have plans to deploy additional cargo examination staff and detector dogs to various air cargo terminals and the Air Mail Centre; if so, of the numbers; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) given that the number of cases involving the use of air postal packets and express cargoes to smuggle drugs in 2017 increased by almost 40 per cent compared with that in 2016, and that there is an array of tactics used by drug traffickers to commit crimes and conceal drugs, of the mechanism or procedure to be adopted by the authorities for detecting drugs in air postal packets and express cargoes, as well as the advanced examination equipment or chemical processes that will be employed for this purpose?

Reply:

President,

The Customs and Excise Department (C&ED) is the primary agency responsible for the suppression of smuggling activities in Hong Kong. Smuggling refers to the illegal movement of goods and articles into and out of Hong Kong. Common smuggling activities include bringing undeclared dutiable goods (e.g. cigarettes) into Hong Kong, as well as import and export of prohibited/controlled articles (e.g. dangerous drugs, infringing goods, endangered species, firearms, ammunition and weapons, etc.) without licences/certificates required by the law. The enforcement powers for customs officers are vested in various ordinances, mainly the Customs and Excise Service Ordinance (Cap 342) and the Import and Export Ordinance (Cap 60). The maximum penalty for conviction on indictment of the most serious smuggling offence is life imprisonment and an unlimited fine.

C&ED has all along been combating various smuggling activities proactively, and the overall smuggling situation in Hong Kong has been under effective control. C&ED noticed that in recent years, smugglers are transporting illicit articles through air postal packets and express cargoes, which are increasingly convenient and much lower in cost. Against this trend, C&ED has devised pragmatic and holistic strategies to intercept illicit articles, in an efficient way, from being transported to and from Hong Kong.

My reply to the various parts of the question is as follows:

(1) In the past five years, the number of air smuggling cases (including through cargoes, postal packets and travellers) detected by C&ED surged from 4 141 cases in 2013 to 7 786 cases in 2017, involving dutiable goods, dangerous drugs, infringing goods, endangered species as well as firearms, ammunition and weapons (see details at Annex). C&ED does not have statistics on the respective percentages of individual travellers and members of organised crime syndicates among the people engaged in such smuggling activities.

(2) C&ED adopts an intelligence-driven and risk management approach to guard against and combat criminal activities. Apart from taking stringent enforcement actions at the airport and various boundary control points, the Syndicate Crimes Investigation Bureau was set up in 2013 to combat organised crime syndicates by conducting in-depth investigation into the syndicated mode of smuggling operation and employing financial investigation skills to trace criminal proceeds and funding sources. In light of the exponential growth in the volume of air postal packets and express cargoes, C&ED has implemented multi-pronged strategies and measures to cope with this challenge.

On deployment of manpower resources, customs officers station at all air cargo terminals and Air Mail Centre (AMC) round the clock. In combating smuggling activities using air postal packets and express cargoes, C&ED steps up the enforcement through flexible manpower deployment and with the assistance of canine units to detect narcotics. C&ED has planned to create additional new posts to enhance law enforcement capability on customs clearance of air cargoes and postal articles.

On collaboration with the industry, C&ED has been working closely with express couriers to facilitate its law enforcement. In 2015, C&ED signed a Memorandum of Understanding with major express courier operators to address the ever-increasing smuggling activities. Meanwhile, C&ED shares with frontline courier staff the latest smuggling trend through regular outreach programmes. C&ED has also taken the initiative in co-operating with the Hongkong Post to enhance examination of high-risk air postal packets at AMC and other mail processing centres.

On intelligence gathering, C&ED has enhanced networking with Mainland and overseas law enforcement agencies through frequent and timely intelligence exchanges and mounting of joint operations. In addition, C&ED is proactively developing the Customs and Excise Information and Risk Management System (CEIRMS). CEIRMS will provide a centralised repository to facilitate quick entity matching and analysis of information as well as automatically capture the latest findings of an entity being searched, making C&ED's risk profiling work more efficient. CEIRMS will be implemented in June 2018.

On publicity and education, C&ED has been actively disseminating anti-smuggling messages to the public through leaflets, press conferences, press interviews with officers and other means. C&ED also launches various initiatives to educate youngsters, such as the Youth Ambassador Against Internet Piracy Scheme, and joins hands with the Education Bureau to enhance the youth's self-discipline and civic responsibility to stay away from illicit activities.

(3) To enhance detection capability, C&ED has been actively using advance technology in customs clearance. Keeping abreast of the technological development in x-ray scanners and trace detectors, C&ED is endeavoured to source the most updated equipment for deployment by frontline staff, including the ion scanner and Raman spectroscopy for detection of narcotics and explosives, as well as other specialised equipment such as the fibrescope, density meter, radiation detector, etc.

Besides, C&ED is working towards enhancing the degree of automation in postal clearance, so that selected air postal packets can be automatically and more quickly conveyed to the customs examination hall for x-ray scanning and further inspection if required. This will facilitate elimination of labour-intensive processes, enabling frontline staff to focus on risk profiling and examination of selected packets.

[HKSAR Government concerned about HK TV station cameraman being taken away by](#)

police in Beijing

On an incident relating to a Hong Kong television station cameraman being handcuffed and taken into a police vehicle in Beijing, a spokesman for the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government said today (May 16) that the Government is very concerned about the incident. The Office of the Government of the HKSAR of the People's Republic of China in Beijing (Beijing Office) has immediately contacted the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of the State Council (HKMAO) to express concern, and notes that the HKMAO is seeking information and following up on the incident with relevant departments.

The spokesman said the Beijing Office would render all possible assistance to the media involved in the incident.

Special traffic arrangements for race meeting in Happy Valley

Special traffic arrangements will be implemented in Happy Valley today (May 16). The arrangements will come into effect one and a half hours before the start of the first race and will last until the crowds have dispersed after the race meeting.

A. Traffic arrangements before the commencement of the first race

1. Road closure

Southbound Wong Nai Chung Road between Queen's Road East and the up-ramp outside Hong Kong Jockey Club (HKJC) will be closed except for vehicles heading for Aberdeen Tunnel.

2. Traffic diversions

- Southbound Wong Nai Chung Road between Village Road and the up-ramp outside HKJC will be re-routed one way northbound;
- Vehicles from eastbound Queen's Road East heading for Wan Chai and Happy Valley will be diverted to turn left to Morrison Hill Road;
- Traffic along southbound Morrison Hill Road heading for Happy Valley will be diverted via Sports Road and Wong Nai Chung Road;
- Traffic along Queen's Road East cannot turn right to Wong Nai Chung Road except for vehicles heading to Aberdeen Tunnel;
- Traffic from Cross Harbour Tunnel heading for Queen's Road East will be diverted via the down-ramp leading from southbound Canal Road flyover to Morrison Hill Road to turn right at the junction of Wong Nai Chung Road and

Queen's Road East; and

– Traffic from Cross Harbour Tunnel heading for Happy Valley or Racecourse will be diverted via the down-ramp leading from southbound Canal Road flyover to Canal Road East, southbound Morrison Hill Road, Sports Road and Wong Nai Chung Road.

B. Traffic arrangements during the race meeting

1. Road closure

The following roads will be closed from 35 minutes before the start of the last race:

- The up-ramp on Wong Nai Chung Road outside HKJC leading to Aberdeen Tunnel;
 - Southbound Wong Nai Chung Road between Queen's Road East and the up-ramp leading to Aberdeen Tunnel;
 - Southbound Wong Nai Chung Road between Village Road and the Public Stands of HKJC;
 - Westbound Leighton Road between Wong Nai Chung Road and Canal Road East;
- and
- Southbound Morrison Hill Road between Leighton Road and Queen's Road East.

In addition, southbound Wong Nai Chung Road between the up-ramp leading to Aberdeen Tunnel and the Public Stands of HKJC will be closed from about 10 minutes before the start of the last race.

2. Traffic diversions

The following traffic arrangements will be implemented from 35 minutes before the start of the last race:

- Eastbound Queen's Road East at its junction with Morrison Hill Road will be reduced to one-lane traffic heading for northbound Canal Road flyover;
- Vehicles from Cross Harbour Tunnel heading for Wan Chai will be diverted via the down-ramp leading from Canal Road East, U-turn slip road beneath Canal Road flyover, Canal Road West and Hennessy Road;
- Vehicles from Cross Harbour Tunnel heading for Happy Valley will be diverted via the down-ramp leading from Canal Road East, eastbound Leighton Road and Wong Nai Chung Road;
- Traffic on southbound Morrison Hill Road will be diverted to turn left to eastbound Leighton Road;
- Traffic along southbound Morrison Hill Road heading for Happy Valley will be diverted via eastbound Leighton Road and Wong Nai Chung Road; and
- Traffic along westbound Leighton Road will be diverted to Wong Nai Chung Road.

C. Learner drivers prohibition

Learner drivers will be prohibited to turn left from Caroline Hill Road to Leighton Road between one and a half hours before the start of the first race and one hour after the last race. In addition, learner drivers will be prohibited from accessing the following roads within the above period of

time:

- Shan Kwong Road between Yik Yam Street and Wong Nai Chung Road;
- Village Road between its upper and lower junctions with Shan Kwong Road;
- Percival Street between Hennessy Road and Leighton Road;
- Canal Road East; and
- The service road leading from Gloucester Road to Canal Road flyover.

D. Suspension of parking spaces

Parking spaces on southbound Wong Nai Chung Road between Sports Road and Blue Pool Road will be suspended from 11am to 7pm during day racing, from 4.30pm to 11.59pm during evening racing, and from 5pm to 11.59pm during night racing.

Any vehicles found illegally parked within the precincts of the above affected areas will be towed away without prior notice.

Actual implementation of road closure and traffic diversion will be made by the Police at the time depending on traffic conditions in the areas. Motorists should exercise tolerance and patience, and follow the instructions of Police on site.

[Labour Department to hold occupational health public talks](#)

The Labour Department (LD) will hold a public talk entitled "Health hazards of hot environment at work" on May 23 (Wednesday). The talk, designed for workers in hot environments to enhance their awareness of heat stroke prevention, will introduce symptoms of heat stroke, its first aid treatment and preventive measures.

The talk, to be given by the LD's occupational health nurse and occupational hygienist, will be held at 6.30pm at Activity Room 1, Hong Kong Central Library, 66 Causeway Road, Causeway Bay.

The LD will hold another talk entitled "Prevention of upper limb disorders" on May 30 (Wednesday). The talk will introduce the causes and preventive measures of upper limb disorders to enhance employees' awareness of the issues.

The talk will be held at 2.30pm at the lecture room of Fanling Occupational Health Clinic (7/F, Fanling Health Centre, 2 Pik Fung Road, Fanling), during which an occupational health nurse from the LD will lead demonstrations and practice of workplace exercise.

Both talks will be conducted in Cantonese. Admission is free. For enquiries or registration, please call 2852 4040.

Family doctors play important role in prevention and control of non-communicable diseases

In support of World Family Doctor Day this Saturday (May 19), the Department of Health (DH) today (May 16) called on the public to recognise the crucial role of family doctors in delivering primary care and safeguarding the health of the community, particularly in the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases (NCDs).

World Family Doctor Day has been celebrated annually by the World Organization of Family Doctors since 2010 to give recognition to the role and contribution of family doctors in healthcare systems around the world. The theme this year is "Family doctors – leading the way to better health".

"Family doctors, as the first point of contact for individuals and families in the healthcare process, are the main provider of primary care, which is the first level of care in the whole healthcare system. They provide comprehensive, continuing, whole-person, co-ordinated and preventive care to individuals and their families to ensure their physical, psychological and social well-being. They also play a key role in the prevention and control of diseases including NCDs," a spokesman for the DH said.

In Hong Kong, five major NCDs, namely cancers, cardiovascular diseases including heart diseases and stroke, diabetes and chronic respiratory diseases accounted for about 55 per cent of all registered deaths in 2016. To curb the burden of NCDs, the Government has recently launched "Towards 2025: Strategy and Action Plan to Prevent and Control Non-communicable Diseases in Hong Kong" (SAP), which defines nine local health targets to be achieved by 2025.

"One of the initiatives in the SAP is to strengthen the health system at all levels, in particular comprehensive primary care for prevention, early detection and management of NCDs based on the family doctor model," the spokesman added.

To tie in with the annual World Family Doctor Day and further promote the concept of family doctors, the DH and Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK), with support from the Hong Kong College of Family Physicians, have jointly produced a five-episode television programme, "My Family Doctor 3", which will be premiered on World Family Doctor Day on May 19.

The drama series features the important role of family doctors in assisting patients to quit smoking and alcohol drinking to prevent diseases, as well as early detection of NCDs including colorectal cancer. It also covers other health topics including food allergies, mood problems and sexually transmitted diseases. The programme will be broadcast on RTHK Channel 31 at 9.30pm to 10pm every Saturday from May 19 to June 16, and on TVB Jade at 6pm to 6.30pm every Tuesday from May 22 to June 19.

To assist the public to search for primary care providers, the DH since 2011 has set up the Primary Care Directory (www.familydoctor.gov.hk) under which sub-directories of family doctors, dentists and Chinese medicine practitioners are currently available. For more information on the concept of family doctors and primary care, please visit the website of the Primary Care Office of the DH (www.pco.gov.hk).