

Property management company of Yuen Long Landmark convicted for illegal discharge of wastewater

Yuen Long Landmark at Castle Peak Road in Yuen Long discharged sub-standard wastewater and its property management company, Kai Shing Management Services Limited, was fined \$15,000 at Fanling Magistrates' Courts today (June 12) for contravening the Water Pollution Control Ordinance (WPCO).

The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) enforcement team carried out a blitz inspection last December and found that turbid wastewater was being discharged from the grease trap of Yuen Long Landmark. The EPD officers then collected a wastewater sample for analysis and the result showed that the oil and grease in the wastewater exceeded the WPCO licence limit by nearly one fold. After evidence gathering, the EPD initiated prosecution against the licensee, Kai Shing Management Services Limited, in accordance with the WPCO.

An EPD spokesman reminded all wastewater discharge licensees, including property management companies, that they must properly repair and maintain wastewater treatment facilities and strictly adhere to the discharge standards as stipulated in the licence to prevent environmental pollution. The spokesman said that when waste oil and grease are discharged to the sewers, they will accumulate inside the sewer pipes and lead to blockage of public sewers downstream, which can adversely affect the normal operation of the Government's sewage treatment plants.

Under the WPCO, anyone who discharges commercial or industrial wastewater which exceeds the standard of the discharge licence into communal sewers commits an offence. First-time offenders are liable to a maximum fine of \$200,000 and six months' imprisonment.

Total number of reported drug abusers declined but drug abuse among young adults and hidden drug abuse still warrant attention

The Action Committee Against Narcotics (ACAN) reviewed the local drug situation in the first quarter of 2018 at its quarterly meeting today (June

12). The total number of reported drug abusers declined compared to the same period in 2017. However, hidden drug abuse and drug abuse among young adults still call for attention.

According to the latest figures of the Central Registry of Drug Abuse (CRDA), the total number of reported drug abusers in the first quarter of 2018 decreased by 6 per cent (from 2,357 to 2,209) as compared to the same period last year, while the number of reported drug abusers aged under 21 decreased by 29 per cent (from 154 to 110).

The number of newly reported drug abusers decreased by 23 per cent (from 414 to 320). Over half (51 per cent) were young adults aged between 21 and 35.

The latest CRDA figures also revealed that the median history of drug abuse of newly reported abusers (i.e. the time for abusers to be reported to the CRDA by reporting agencies from their first drug abuse) was 5.3 years in the first quarter of 2018, while the figure for 2017 was 4.3 years, indicating that hidden drug abuse remains a concern.

In the first quarter of 2018, the total number of reported narcotic analgesic abusers increased by 13 per cent (from 1,323 to 1,494) when compared to the same period in 2017. The vast majority were heroin abusers (1,493). The total number of reported psychotropic substance abusers (PSAs) declined by 28 per cent (from 1,307 to 946) when compared to the same period in 2017. Among the newly reported cases, the number of PSAs (at 267) was substantially higher than that of narcotic analgesic abusers (at 51), suggesting the continued prevalence of psychotropic substance abuse.

Methamphetamine (commonly known as "Ice") continued to be the most common type of psychotropic substance abused, with the number of reported abusers having dropped by 41 per cent (from 573 to 337) as compared to the same period in 2017. Other major types of psychotropic substances recording a lower number of reported abusers included triazolam/midazolam/zopiclone (from 283 to 251), cocaine (from 236 to 213), ketamine (from 250 to 110), cannabis (from 109 to 93), cough medicine (from 79 to 58) and nimetazepam (from 10 to seven).

The ACAN Chairman, Dr Ben Cheung, said, "Despite the drop of the total number of reported drug abusers, over half of the newly reported drug abusers were young adults, indicating the need for continued attention to the drug abuse problem of this age group. As PSAs may not display obvious withdrawal symptoms, they may not be easily identified. Members of the public should therefore have an awareness of hidden drug abuse, and encourage those in need to seek help. Young persons should make wise choices, knowing how to say no to drugs and pursue a healthy lifestyle. Persons with drug problems can seek help through the 24-hour hotline 186 186 or the instant messaging service 98 186 186 of the Narcotics Division (ND) of the Security Bureau."

The Commissioner for Narcotics, Ms Manda Chan, said, "With the summer holidays approaching, ACAN and the ND will step up anti-drug promotions,

including the launch of new television and radio Announcements in the Public Interest on the harms of 'Ice' and cocaine abuse, and encouraging early help seeking. Advertisements will also be placed on public transportation networks, in entertainment venues, and on popular websites, mobile applications and social media platforms.

"Youngsters are encouraged to make good use of the summer holidays to participate in healthy activities. Don't take drugs out of curiosity or peer pressure. Don't be used by criminals to engage in drug trafficking. Drug trafficking is a serious offence with a maximum penalty of life imprisonment and a fine of \$5 million."

The CRDA figures for the first quarter of 2018 are available on the ND's website (www.nd.gov.hk/en/index.htm).

2018-19 civil service pay adjustment

The Civil Service Bureau announced today (June 12) that the Chief Executive-in-Council (CE-in-Council) has decided that civil service pay for 2018-19 should be adjusted as follows, taking retrospective effect from April 1 this year:

(a) a pay increase of 4.06 per cent for civil servants in the upper salary band and the directorate (equal to the net pay trend indicator (PTI) for the upper salary band), subject to the pay points referred to in (i) and (ii) below, the dollar values of which should be as specified:

(i) Master Pay Scale 34 at \$70,590; and

(ii) General Disciplined Services (Officer) Pay Scale (GDS(0)) 20 and Police Pay Scale (PPS) 36 at \$70,470, and GDS(0) 21 and PPS 37 at \$70,970; and

(b) a pay increase of 4.51 per cent for civil servants in the lower and middle salary bands (equal to the net PTI for the middle salary band).

In arriving at this decision, the CE-in-Council has thoroughly considered the staff side's response to the pay offers and all the relevant factors under the established annual civil service pay adjustment mechanism, including:

- * the net PTIs;
- * the state of Hong Kong's economy;
- * changes in the cost of living;
- * the Government's fiscal position;
- * the pay claims of the staff side; and
- * civil service morale.

The Government will submit the 2018-19 civil service pay adjustment proposal to the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council for consideration as soon as possible.

EPD prosecutes importer for illegal imports of hazardous electronic waste from Thailand (with photos)

The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) successfully intercepted two cases of illegal import of hazardous electronic waste (e-waste) from Thailand at the Kwai Chung Container Terminals. The importer concerned, Sheen Bless Limited, was fined \$26,000 at Fanling Magistrates' Courts today (June 12) for contravening the Waste Disposal Ordinance (WDO).

In collaboration with the Customs and Excise Department, the EPD staff intercepted four imported containers from Thailand at the Kwai Chung Container Terminals in November and December last year. The containers were claimed to contain liquid crystal panels, but were actually loaded with hazardous e-waste comprising waste flat panel displays (FPDs), with a total market value of about \$290,000. The containers intercepted were immediately returned to the place of origin. The EPD notified the foreign enforcement authorities concerned about the return shipments and instigated prosecution against the importer in accordance with the WDO.

An EPD spokesman stressed that dismantled or destroyed FPDs are hazardous e-waste, containing heavy metals and other toxic substances. They are classified as chemical waste and are regulated under the existing laws on chemical waste disposal. To protect the environment, the EPD strictly controls the illegal import and export activities of hazardous waste.

The spokesman reminded importers of the waste recycling trade not to illegally import (including import into or transshipment through Hong Kong) or export hazardous waste. According to the WDO, it is an offence for anyone to import or export hazardous waste without a valid permit. First-time offenders are liable to a maximum fine of \$200,000 and six months' imprisonment. For subsequent offences, offenders are liable to a maximum fine of \$500,000 and two years' imprisonment.

Members of the public may visit the EPD's website for more information about the control of chemical waste: www.epd.gov.hk/epd/english/environmentinhk/waste/guide_ref/guide_cwc.html.



SFST visits Tai Po District

The Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Mr James Lau, visited Tai Po District this morning (June 12). He went to a secondary school and met with members of a merchants association and the Tai Po District Council to exchange views on various issues.

Mr Lau first visited Ling Liang Church M H Lau Secondary School, where he toured the facilities of a creative robotics project that promotes STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) education by instilling creativity and logical thinking among students. He watched demonstrations on students making use of computer programming to control robots designed by themselves, and got to know how they felt about taking part in the project.

Mr Lau said he was glad to see students making every effort to perfect their designs and he encouraged them to stay passionate in their pursuits.

Mr Lau then proceeded to the Tai Po Merchants Association Limited and chatted with representatives on the business environment and topics of concern.

Before concluding the visit, Mr Lau met with members of the Tai Po District Council to exchange views on various issues including housing supply, demand-side management measures on the property market and the life annuity scheme.