

Government gazettes to include more endangered species on control list

The Government gazetted today (October 13) the Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance (Amendment of Schedules 1 and 3) Order 2023 (the Amendment Order), to amend Schedules 1 and 3 to the Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance (Cap. 586) to reflect the latest control list of endangered species under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

A spokesman for the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) said that CITES is implemented in Hong Kong through the Ordinance and hence the Ordinance is updated from time to time in light of the latest requirements of CITES. The Amendment Order aims to give effect to the latest regulations of CITES on the controlled species.

The Amendment Order mainly reflects the addition, removal and other changes of species listed in the Appendices to CITES, and involves a number of species of freshwater turtles, river stingrays, sharks, sea cucumbers, wood, etc. On the other hand, some existing controls, pursuant to the amendments, will be relaxed to facilitate the corresponding trade. For example, the latest amendments will relax the control on some Orchidaceae species in relation to retail trade of relevant cosmetic products. Major amendments are set out in the Annex.

Under the Ordinance, except with exemptions or otherwise specified, the import, export, re-export, introduction from the sea or possession of the controlled species, including their parts and derivatives, are subject to licensing control. The Amendment Order will be tabled at the Legislative Council on October 18 for negative vetting, and the new control measures will come into effect on December 15. A Licence to Possess must be obtained within the three-month grace period (i.e. on or before March 14, 2024) for the possession of specimens of Appendix I species or live specimens of wild origin of Appendix II species for commercial purposes. Local trading of the listed species, which were already imported legally before the implementation of the new amendments, can continue under licensing control. The AFCD will introduce to relevant traders and stakeholders the details of the amendments to the Ordinance through circular letters and briefing sessions.

The spokesman said, "More endangered species will be included on the control list after the amendments to the Ordinance come into effect. This will help enhance protection of more endangered species and enable Hong Kong to make a contribution to nature conservation at an international level."

The spokesman reminded the public that it is illegal for any person to import, export or possess any endangered species without a required licence. Offenders are liable to a maximum penalty of a \$10 million fine and imprisonment for 10 years upon conviction. The specimens will also be forfeited. For licensing requirements for the species listed on different

appendices, please visit the website: www.cites.hk. For enquiries, please contact the AFCD through email (hk_cites@afcd.gov.hk) or call 1823.