

Grocery store owner and shopkeeper convicted of operating money service without licence

A female owner and a female shopkeeper of a grocery store were convicted of operating a money service without a valid licence at Fanling Magistrates' Courts. They were fined \$8,000 and \$5,000 respectively.

Customs officers conducted an investigation in June of last year and discovered that the female store owner and the female shopkeeper had been operating a remittance business at a grocery store in Yuen Long after the expiry of its Money Service Operator licence. They were suspected of operating a money service without a licence. The female store owner was fined \$8,000 in June this year while the female shopkeeper was fined \$5,000 today (December 21) after they were convicted at Fanling Magistrates' Courts.

Under the Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorist Financing Ordinance, a person who wishes to operate a remittance or money changing service needs to first obtain a licence from the Customs and Excise Department. The maximum penalty for such operators without a valid licence upon conviction is a fine of \$100,000 and imprisonment for six months.

Customs reminds consumers to procure services from licensed money service operators. A register of licensees is accessible from the website of Customs' Money Service Operators Licensing System at eservices.customs.gov.hk/MSOS/wsrh/001s1?request_locale=en.

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