

Hong Kong AEO Programme extends business opportunities under Greater Bay Area development and Belt and Road Initiative (with photos)

The Customs and Excise Department (C&ED) and the General Administration of Customs of the People's Republic of China (GACC) held a joint seminar today (February 22) for the Hong Kong Authorized Economic Operator (AEO) Programme participants on their business advantages from the Mainland-Hong Kong AEO Mutual Recognition Arrangement (MRA) under the context of the Greater Bay Area (GBA) development and the Belt and Road Initiative.

Speaking at the seminar, Deputy Director General of the Department of Enterprise Management and Audit-Based Control of the GACC Mr Zhu Fang gave a briefing to the audience on how the status as an AEO helps in exploring business opportunities under the two development plans.

Under the current MRA with the Mainland, the average inspection rate for Hong Kong AEO cargo entering or leaving the Mainland, including the GBA, is 80 per cent less as compared with non-AEO counterparts. A substantially reduced examination rate and prioritised clearance could help the companies in reducing operating costs, strengthening competitiveness and marketability, and exploring the unlimited business opportunities in the markets of the Belt and Road region.

The MRA between the Mainland and Hong Kong was signed in October 2013 to raise the level of supply chain security management and speed up clearance efficiency. It reinforces Hong Kong's advantages as an international logistics hub and confirms its role and function as one of the powerhouses in leading the regional development under the GBA development plan.

During the event today, the Assistant Commissioner of Customs and Excise (Excise and Strategic Support), Mr Jimmy Tam, also presented certificates to six new members of the AEO Programme. The newly accredited members are Hong Kong enterprises mainly engaged in import and export business.

Since its implementation in 2012, the number of companies accredited as AEOs under the programme has now risen to 50.

Mr Tam said that the department would develop along the policy agenda of smart customs clearance described in the Chief Executive's 2018 Policy Address under the four-pronged smart customs blueprint covering "application", "research and development", "analysis" and "fortification" to fulfil fully the new roles of "facilitator" and "promoter" as advocated by the current-term Government. Ways of refining the AEO Programme will also be explored so that a more business-friendly environment can be created, foreign investment can be attracted and enterprises will go global.

It was also announced at the ceremony that the MRA between Hong Kong and New Zealand signed during the 132nd Council Session of the World Customs Organization in Brussels, Belgium, last June started implementation today.

Currently, the C&ED has ratified MRAs with nine Customs administrations of the Mainland, India, Korea, Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, Japan, Australia and New Zealand, among which seven are along the Belt and Road region, making the advantages of Hong Kong AEOs in exploring the markets there especially outstanding. MRAs with Canada, Israel and Mexico will also be concluded later this year.

About 140 guests, including consuls and customs attachés, as well as representatives from Hong Kong AEO members, trade associations and private sector stakeholders, attended the seminar and the ceremony.

