

Hong Kong Customs arrests male director and female staff member of chain massage parlour suspected of unfair trade practices in sale of services

Hong Kong Customs yesterday (January 24) arrested a male director and a female staff member of a chain massage parlour suspected of wrongly accepting payments when selling massage services, in contravention of the Trade Descriptions Ordinance (TDO).

Customs earlier received information alleging that a chain massage parlour with three branches failed to provide massage services purchased by customers. Following investigations launched by a swiftly established dedicated team concerning the case, Customs found that the massage parlour still accepted payments for prepaid services from customers even as its branches were in rent arrears, or their leases were about to expire. Customers who had purchased prepaid massage services were unable to use the services concerned and did not receive any refunds after the massage parlour suddenly announced its business closure.

After a follow-up investigation, Customs officers yesterday conducted an enforcement operation and arrested a 45-year-old male director and a 44-year-old female staff member of the massage parlour connected with the case.

An investigation is ongoing and the two arrested persons have been released on bail pending further investigation.

Customs has been paying close attention to the case and called on members of the public affected to provide information. As of 8am today (January 25), Customs had received a total of 248 complaints regarding the massage parlour concerned involving massage contracts amounting to about \$1.1 million.

Customs reminds traders to comply with the requirements of the TDO. Consumers are also reminded to procure services at reputable shops and think prudently before making consumption decisions with prepayments.

Under the TDO, any trader commits an offence if at the time of acceptance of payment, the trader intends not to supply the product or intends to supply a materially different product, or there are no reasonable grounds for believing that the trader will be able to supply the product within a specified or reasonable period. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$500,000 and imprisonment for five years.

â€‹

Members of the public may report any suspected violations of the TDO to

Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk) or online form (eform.cefs.gov.hk/form/ced002).