

Hong Kong Customs combats unfair trade practice at medicine shop

Hong Kong Customs today (September 13) arrested a salesman of a medicine shop suspected of engaging in unfair trade practices involving misleading omission in the course of selling a Chinese herbal medicine, in contravention of the Trade Descriptions Ordinance (TDO).

Customs earlier received information alleging that a staff member of a medicine shop in Mong Kok was suspected of misleading a customer and claiming that other goods purchased by the customer would be free of charge if he bought a certain value of the Chinese herbal medicine. After the Chinese herbal medicine was ground into powder, the staff member revealed that the price of the medicine was 10 times higher than what was expected, and the customer could only receive other goods for free if the transaction was accepted.

After an in-depth investigation, Customs officers today arrested a salesman, aged 34, of the medicine shop concerned.

An investigation is ongoing and the arrestee has been released on bail pending further investigation.

Customs has all along been concerned about visitors being misled to make purchases by unfair trade practices and has established a Quick Response Team to handle urgent complaints lodged by short-haul visitors. The complaints will be promptly referred to investigators to handle with priority.

Customs reminded traders to comply with the requirements of the TDO and consumers to purchase products from reputable shops. Consumers should also be cautious about the unit price and ask for more information, including the total price of the goods selected, before making a purchase decision.

Under the TDO, any trader who engages in a commercial practice that omits or hides material information or provides material information in a manner that is unclear, unintelligible, ambiguous or untimely, and as a result causes, or is likely to cause, an average consumer to make a transactional decision commits an offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$500,000 and imprisonment for five years.

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/).