

Hong Kong Customs combats unfair trade practices at education centre

Hong Kong Customs today (December 17) arrested a female director of an education centre suspected of engaging in commercial practices involving misleading omission and having wrongly accepted payment in the promotion of pre-nursery course, in contravention of the Trade Descriptions Ordinance (TDO).

Customs earlier received information alleging that a female director of an education centre was suspected of omitting material information in the course of sale of pre-nursery course, i.e. the education centre was not qualified to deliver such course. The education centre was also suspected of collecting payment for the course even after a petition for winding up had been lodged. The centre eventually closed and was unable to deliver the course.

After investigation, Customs officers today arrested a 36-year-old woman.

Investigation is ongoing and the arrested woman has been released on bail pending further investigation.

Under the TDO, any trader who engages in a commercial practice that omits or hides material information 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.

In addition, 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.

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