

Hong Kong Customs combats unfair trade practices at fitness centre

Hong Kong Customs today (October 29) arrested a male director, a female director and five male staff members of a fitness centre suspected of engaging in aggressive commercial practices in the course of selling fitness service, in contravention of the Trade Descriptions Ordinance (TDO).

Customs earlier received information alleging that staff members of a fitness centre in Mong Kok imposed undue influence in selling fitness services to three customers who were forced to procure fitness club membership valued at \$9,600, \$19,200 and \$36,000 respectively.

After investigation, Customs officers today arrested six men and one woman, aged between 20 and 27.

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

Customs reminds traders to comply with the requirements of the TDO and consumers to procure services at reputable shops. Before making the purchase decision, consumers should not easily provide their identity cards or credit cards to a salesperson. Consumers should firmly refuse signing any sales documents if they have no intention to purchase.

Under the TDO, any trader commits an offence of engaging in aggressive commercial practices if harassment, coercion or undue influence is used to impair consumer's freedom of choice or conduct, causing the consumer to make a transactional decision. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$500,000 and imprisonment for five years. The management staff will also be liable if the offence is committed with their consent or connivance or is attributed to their neglect.

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).