

Hong Kong Customs combats unfair trade practices at fitness centre

Hong Kong Customs today (December 19) arrested four 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 with two branches in Mong Kok and Yau Ma Tei were suspected of falsely claiming that customers had not fully paid for their procured fitness service plans and, by imposing undue influence, requested four customers to pay additional sum of money. The customers were forced to pay a total of \$10,800, \$16,200, \$48,800 and \$246,000 respectively.

After investigation, Customs officers today arrested four men, aged between 21 and 23.

Investigation is ongoing and the arrested men 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 any purchase decision, consumers should be cautious in providing their identity cards or credit cards to a salesperson. Consumers should firmly refuse signing any documents if they do not clearly know the content and price of the service to be provided, or have no intention to purchase the service.

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.

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).