

Hong Kong Customs combats unfair trade practices at medicine shop

Hong Kong Customs today (January 14) arrested two salesmen 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 staff members of a medicine shop in Mong Kok were suspected to have misled a customer to believe the unit price of a Chinese herbal medicine was calculated per catty. After the Chinese herbal medicine was ground into powder, the staff members revealed that the medicine was priced per mace. The charged price was 160 times higher than what was expected.

After an in-depth investigation, Customs officers today arrested two salesmen, aged 31 and 33, of the medicine shop concerned.

An investigation is ongoing and the two arrested men were held for inquiry.

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.

With Lunar New Year approaching, Customs will continue to step up inspection and enforcement to vigorously combat unfair trade practices.

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).