

Hong Kong Customs combats unfair trade practices at online toy shop

Hong Kong Customs yesterday (May 30) arrested a male online toy shop owner suspected of engaging in wrongly accepting payments when selling toy models at his online shop, in contravention of the Trade Descriptions Ordinance (TDO).

Customs earlier received a number of reports alleging that an online toy shop failed to supply a type of renowned bear-shaped brick-style figurine to the customer who made the order within the specified date or a reasonable period after accepting a payment from the customer and no refund was offered. A total of 12 customers and 27 figurines were involved in the reports.

After investigation, Customs officers yesterday arrested a 32-year-old man suspected to be connected with the case. He is the owner of the online toy shop concerned.

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

Customs has all along been concerned about illegal online sales activities. It has strived to combat unfair trade practices on websites to protect consumers' interests.

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 of five years.

Customs reminds traders to comply with the requirements of the TDO. Traders should not accept advance payments from consumers if they are uncertain whether the pertinent goods or services can be delivered to consumers within a specific or reasonable time. Before buying a popular product, consumers should pay attention to its supply quantity and supply period, including the announcement made by the brand owners for reference. Also, they should make orders through reputable traders. After purchasing the products, consumers should keep the transaction receipts and related records, which can become the basic information in case a complaint is lodged in the future.

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).