

# Hong Kong Customs combats unfair trade practices by fitness centre

Hong Kong Customs today (June 17) arrested a female staff member of a chain fitness centre suspected of engaging in aggressive commercial practices in the course of selling fitness services, in contravention of the Trade Descriptions Ordinance (TDO).

Customs earlier received information alleging that a female salesperson of the Kowloon Bay branch of a chain fitness centre asked a customer to sign a form to check whether there were any promotional offers available. The customer was told that there was no obligation to pay. After the customer signed the form, the salesperson immediately revealed that the form was actually a fitness membership contract and forced him to settle the payment. A total of about \$15,000 was involved in the service contract.

After investigation, Customs officers today arrested a 24-year-old woman. Investigation is ongoing.

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 to sign any sales document 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 a 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.

Stressing its priority given to consumer rights protection and zero tolerance for unfair trade practices, Customs pledges that it will continue its stringent enforcement actions against unscrupulous traders.

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