

# Joint Press Conference by Hong Kong Customs and AFCD on combating endangered species smuggling activities and amendments to schedules of Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance (Cap. 586) will take effect tomorrow

Hong Kong Customs and the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) today (December 14) held a joint press conference on law enforcement results in combating endangered species smuggling activities and amendments to the schedules of Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance (Cap. 586) which will take effect shortly.

In the first 11 months of this year, Customs detected 379 smuggling cases involving endangered species in which 263 persons were arrested and seizures with an estimated market value of about \$80 million were made.

"The overall number of cases as of November this year has increased by nearly 30 per cent compared to the entire previous year, indicating a significant upward trend in the relevant figures," the Divisional Commander (Air Passenger) of the Airport Command of Customs, Mr Lau Leung-chi, said in reporting cases of the illegal import of regulated endangered species at the joint press conference.

"There is a noticeable growth in cases of endangered species seized through passenger channels which surged from 150 cases throughout last year to 250 cases in the first 11 months of this year, representing a growth of 67 per cent. Most of these cases involved passengers bringing regulated endangered species into Hong Kong without a licence, including American ginseng, orchids, dendrobium, dried seahorses, and ivory products," he added.

"With the upcoming Christmas and Lunar New Year holidays, it is expected that many members of the public will travel abroad. Customs urges everyone to exercise caution and ensure that souvenirs or gifts brought back to Hong Kong do not involve regulated endangered species. If there are any doubts or uncertainties, they should refrain from purchasing and bringing them back to Hong Kong to avoid contravention of relevant laws."

In addition, Customs also reminded the public that smuggling is a serious offense. Under the Import and Export Ordinance, any person found guilty of importing or exporting unmanifested cargo is liable to a maximum fine of \$2 million and imprisonment for seven years.

Amendments to the schedules of the Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance (Cap. 586) will come into effect tomorrow (December 15). The Endangered Species Protection Officer of the AFCD, Dr Jenny Lau, introduced the amendments at the joint press conference and said, "The amendments mainly reflect the addition, removal and other changes of species listed in the Appendices to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, and involves a number of species of freshwater turtles, river stingrays, sharks, sea cucumbers, wood, etc. Under the Ordinance, except with exemptions or otherwise specified, the import, export, re-export, introduction from the sea or possession of the controlled species, including their parts and derivatives, are subject to licensing control."

The AFCD reminded members of the public that it is illegal for any person to import, export or possess any endangered species without a required licence. Offenders are liable to a maximum penalty of a \$10 million fine and imprisonment for 10 years upon conviction. The specimens will also be forfeited. For licensing requirements for the species listed on different appendices, members of the public may visit the website: [www.cites.hk](http://www.cites.hk). For enquiries, please contact the AFCD through email ([hk\\_cites@afcd.gov.hk](mailto:hk_cites@afcd.gov.hk)) or call 1823.

Members of the public may report any suspected smuggling activities to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account ([crimereport@customs.gov.hk](mailto:crimereport@customs.gov.hk)) or online form ([eform.cefs.gov.hk/form/ced002](http://eform.cefs.gov.hk/form/ced002)).