

Man sentenced to 39 months' imprisonment for smuggling eggs of endangered parrot species (with photos)

A Thai man who smuggled 72 eggs of an endangered parrot species was convicted at the District Court for violating the Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance (Cap. 586) and sentenced to imprisonment for 39 months today (January 17).

A spokesman for the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) said that the 35-year-old male passenger arrived in Hong Kong on January 25 last year from South Africa via Ethiopia. He was intercepted for customs clearance upon arrival at the airport. A thermal bag connected to two power banks containing a total of 72 eggs was found in his carry-on baggage. He declared the eggs to be from the Cockatiel (*Nymphicus hollandicus*), a species not listed in the Appendices to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). AFCD officers then arrived at the scene to inspect the eggs. Upon inspection, the eggs were suspected to belong to CITES-listed parrot species regulated under the Ordinance. The 72 eggs were seized for further investigation.

Subsequent to forensics testing, the eggs were confirmed to be from CITES-listed endangered parrot species, including a total of 43 eggs from CITES Appendix I species, namely the military macaw (*Ara militaris*) and the grey parrot (*Psittacus erithacus*), and a total of 29 eggs from CITES Appendix II species, namely the white-fronted amazon (*Amazona albifrons*), the blue-and-yellow macaw (*Ara ararauna*), the chestnut-fronted macaw (*Ara severus*) and the red-shouldered macaw (*Diopsittaca nobilis*). The seizure was estimated to be worth over \$1.2 million.

The man was charged with illegal import of endangered species and was convicted today at the District Court. He was sentenced to 39 months behind bars today.

Parrot populations have been decimated by illegal trade, which incentivises poaching in the wild worldwide. With the exception of four species, all parrots have been listed on the CITES Appendices. In Hong Kong, their international trade and local possession are regulated under the Ordinance. Any person importing, exporting or possessing specimens of endangered species not in accordance with the Ordinance commits an offence and will be liable to a maximum fine of HK\$10 million and imprisonment for 10 years upon conviction with the specimens forfeited.

The spokesman said, "The offender attempted to evade the law by making a false declaration of the species name. The AFCD will make use of technology

to assist with inspections as necessary. The public is reminded to observe the law. The AFCD will continue to work closely with the Customs to combat illegal activities involving endangered species."

For information on the regulation of endangered species under the Ordinance, please visit www.cites.hk. To report any suspected irregularities, members of the public can call the AFCD by 1823.

