

Money service operators convicted of operating money service without licence

A female shop owner and a male shopkeeper of a money changer were convicted of operating a money service without a valid licence at the Kwun Tong Magistrates' Courts today (November 13). The male shopkeeper was sentenced to imprisonment for seven weeks and one day while the female shop owner was sentenced to imprisonment for four weeks and five days, suspended for 12 months.

Customs officers in April last year conducted an investigation and discovered that a female shop owner and a male shopkeeper of a money changer in Kwun Tong had been operating a remittance business after its application for a Money Service Operator licence was rejected. Therefore, they were suspected of operating a money service without a licence.

This is the first custodial sentence imposed among unlicensed money service operator cases and Customs reckons that it has achieved a deterrent effect, with a clear warning issued to unlicensed money service operators.

Under the Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorist Financing Ordinance, a person who wishes to operate a remittance or money changing service needs to first obtain a licence from the Customs and Excise Department. The maximum penalty for such operators without a valid licence upon conviction is a fine of \$1 million and imprisonment for two years.

Customs reminds consumers to procure services from licensed money service operators. A register of licensees is accessible from the website of Customs' Money Service Operators Licensing System at eservices.customs.gov.hk/MSOS/wsrh/001s1?request_locale=en.

Members of the public may report any suspected unlicensed money service operation 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).