

Retailer convicted of supplying unsafe whitening cream

A sole proprietor of a retailer was convicted and sentenced to imprisonment for two months suspended for one year and fine of \$2,000 today (April 21) at Eastern Magistrates' Courts for supplying unsafe whitening cream and supplying whitening cream failing to comply with the bilingual labelling requirement, in contravention of the Consumer Goods Safety Ordinance (CGSO) and its subsidiary legislation, the Consumer Goods Safety Regulation (CGSR). The sole proprietor was also ordered by the court to reimburse the testing and relevant costs of about \$34,000 to the Government.

Customs earlier received referrals from a relevant department that there was suspected unsafe whitening cream being sold in the market. Customs officers immediately conducted inspection and test-purchased the type of whitening cream from a retail shop in Central. A total of 133 items of whitening cream of the same type were further seized in the premises during a follow-up operation.

Safety test results revealed that the product contains a mercury level of between 11 000 and 18 000 parts per million. According to the relevant cosmetic hygienic standard, the mercury levels exceed the maximum permitted limit by 11 000 to 18 000 times, and thereby fail to comply with the general safety requirements of the CGSO.

In addition, the product packages fail to bear Chinese and English bilingual warnings or cautions, in contravention of the CGSR.

Customs reminds traders to comply with the requirements of the CGSO and the CGSR. Members of the public should observe the following tips when purchasing and using beauty products:

- Check the trade descriptions and compositions of the beauty products' packages during transactions;
- Do not buy or use beauty products from doubtful sources;
- Check carefully before using the beauty products and stop using the products if they have stains or odd smells;
- Stop using the beauty products and seek medical attention immediately if feeling unwell after use; and
- Purchase beauty products at reputable retail shops.

Under the CGSO, it is an offence to supply, manufacture or import consumer goods unless the goods comply with the general safety requirements for consumer goods. Under the CGSR, where consumer goods or their packages are marked with warnings or cautions with respect to their safe keeping, use, consumption or disposal, such warnings or cautions shall be in both English and Chinese languages. Moreover, the warning or caution phrases must be legibly and conspicuously shown on the goods, any package of the goods, a

label securely affixed to the package or a document enclosed in the package. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$100,000 and imprisonment for one year on first conviction, and \$500,000 and imprisonment for two years on subsequent conviction.

Members of the public with information relating to unsafe or law-breaking consumer goods may make a report via Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk).