

Traveller jailed for smuggling incense tree wood chips (with photo)

A traveller who illegally exported incense tree wood chips was convicted and sentenced to imprisonment for 30 months at the District Court today (February 8).

A spokesman for the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) said that an outbound male traveller heading to the Mainland, aged 32, was intercepted by Customs officers at the Shenzhen Bay Control Point and about 4.2 kilograms of incense tree (*Aquilaria sinensis*) wood chips was seized from his backpack on March 12, 2023. The estimated market value of the wood chips was about \$630,000.

Upon investigation by the AFCD, the man was charged with illegally exporting endangered species under the Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance (PESAPO) (Cap. 586). The AFCD also applied to the court for an enhanced sentence under the Organized and Serious Crime Ordinance (OSCO), (Cap. 455). He was convicted at the court today. The court set 36-month imprisonment as the starting point for sentencing with 12 months' reduction for his guilty plea. The AFCD applied to raise the sentence by 25 per cent in accordance with OSCO. The defendant was sentenced to immediate imprisonment for 30 months.

All *Aquilaria* species, including the native incense tree, are listed under the Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora and are regulated under PESAPO in Hong Kong.

According to PESAPO, 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 \$10 million and imprisonment for 10 years upon conviction with the specimens forfeited.

The spokesman also pointed out that according to the Forests and Countryside Ordinance (Cap. 96), felling of trees on government land without permission is an offence. The maximum penalty is a fine of \$25,000 and imprisonment for one year.

The spokesman appealed to the public not to smuggle agarwood or fell incense trees illegally. To enquire about the importation or exportation of endangered species and to report suspected illegal cases, the public can call the AFCD at 1823 or visit the website www.cites.hk.



[Import of poultry meat and products from areas in Poland suspended](#)

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department announced today (February 8) that in view of a notification from the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) about outbreaks of highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza in MiÅ™dzychodzki District of Wielkopolskie Region and Gorzowski District of Lubuskie Region in Poland, the CFS has instructed the trade to suspend the import of poultry meat and products (including poultry eggs) from the above-mentioned areas with immediate effect to protect public health in Hong Kong.

A CFS spokesman said that according to the Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong imported about 3 110 tonnes of frozen poultry meat from Poland last year.

"The CFS has contacted the Polish authority over the issue and will closely monitor information issued by the WOAH and the relevant authorities on the avian influenza outbreak. Appropriate action will be taken in response to the development of the situation," the spokesman said.

[Quality Assurance Council publishes report on quality audit of HKUST](#)

The following is issued on behalf of the University Grants Committee:

The Quality Assurance Council (QAC) under the University Grants Committee (UGC) today (February 8) published the report on the quality audit

of the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST) in the third audit cycle.

The HKUST was the second university audited in the third audit cycle, which places an emphasis on how individual universities review and enhance their framework on academic standards and academic quality, academic programme development, teaching and learning, student learning assessment and support for students, as well as the collection, analysis and usage of data to inform such quality assurance processes.

The audit report presents the findings of the audit panel appointed by the QAC based on the self-evaluation report prepared by the HKUST and a series of audit meetings with staff, students and external stakeholders (such as employers) of the university held between May and June 2023. After being considered by the QAC, the audit report was endorsed by the UGC in January 2024.

The report identified a number of features of good practice and recommended actions with a view to encouraging the HKUST and the higher education sector as a whole to strive for continuous enhancement to their quality assurance regimes. The full audit report with the formal response from the HKUST is available on the QAC website (www.ugc.edu.hk/eng/qac/about/term/publications/report.html) for public access.

The QAC quality audits ascertain whether the arrangements for quality assurance adopted by universities are fit for purpose and comparable with international best practices. The QAC third audit cycle covers all programmes at the levels of sub-degree, first degree and above, however funded, leading to a qualification wholly or partly awarded by the UGC-funded universities.

The QAC expressed gratitude to the HKUST and all stakeholders for their support for the quality audit.

Special boundary-crossing arrangements during Lunar New Year holidays and associated public transport service arrangements

The Transport Department (TD) today (February 8) reminded the public that the operating hours of the passenger clearance service of individual boundary control points (BCPs) will be extended during the Lunar New Year holidays, and that the following associated special traffic and

transportation arrangements will be implemented.

(1) Lo Wu Control Point

On Lunar New Year Eve (February 9) and the second day of the Lunar New Year (February 11), the operating hours of the passenger clearance service of the Lo Wu Control Point will be extended to 2am on the following days (i.e. February 10 and 12). The service hours of the MTR East Rail Line will be extended correspondingly. The last train heading for Lo Wu Station will depart from Admiralty Station at 0.56am while the last train heading for Admiralty Station will depart from Lo Wu Station at 2.30am. On the evening of the second day of Lunar New Year (February 11), since other MTR lines will maintain normal operating hours, passengers using the East Rail Line during the extended service hours are advised to plan their journey in advance. They may contact the relevant public transport operators, if needed.

The Lok Ma Chau Spur Line Control Point will be closed at 10.30pm on both days (February 9 and 11) as usual. The service hours of the East Rail Line train service to and from Lok Ma Chau Station will not be extended.

(2) Shenzhen Bay Port

Shenzhen Bay Port will implement a 24-hour passenger clearance service from 6.30am on Lunar New Year Eve (February 9) to midnight of the fifth day of the Lunar New Year (February 14). In connection with this arrangement, New Lantao Bus and Citybus will operate special overnight route Nos. NB2 (Yuen Long/Tin Shui Wai-Shenzhen Bay Port) (circular route) and NB3 (Tuen Mun-Shenzhen Bay Port) respectively.

Cross-boundary coach operators will also operate additional overnight cross-boundary coach services between urban areas (including Prince Edward, Yau Ma Tei and Wan Chai) and the Shenzhen Bay Port during small hours (i.e. from midnight to 6.30am) from first day of the Lunar New Year (February 10) to the fifth day of the Lunar New Year (February 14).

(3) Lok Ma Chau Control Point

During the Lunar New Year holiday, the Lok Ma Chau Control Point will maintain a 24-hour operation. The short-haul cross-boundary coach routes plying between urban areas (including Prince Edward, Jordan, Wan Chai and Kwun Tong) and Huanggang Port, as well as the Yellow Bus plying between Lok Ma Chau (San Tin) Public Transport Interchange and Lok Ma Chau/Huanggang Port will enhance services.

In connection with Lunar New Year celebration events, the terminus of the short-haul cross-boundary coach route plying between Jordan and Huanggang Port at the Austin Road Cross Boundary Coach Terminus will temporarily be relocated to the coach pick-up and drop-off area at Wui Man Road outside Hong Kong West Kowloon Station on the first day of the Lunar New Year (February 10) and the second day of the Lunar New Year (February 11) from 8pm to midnight. On the other hand, the terminus of the short-haul cross-boundary

coach route plying between Wan Chai and Huanggang Port at Exhibition Station Public Transport Interchange will temporarily be relocated to Hennessy Road (Westbound) near Southorn Centre from 4.30pm on the second day of Lunar New Year (February 11) until the reopening of the roads.

Subject to actual traffic conditions, special traffic measures may be implemented in the vicinity of San Tin Interchange, San Sham Road and the Lok Ma Chau Control Point to allowing smooth access of public transport vehicles including cross-boundary coaches, Yellow Buses, Green Minibuses and taxis to the Lok Ma Chau Control Point.

On the other hand, only those cross-boundary private cars (i.e. private cars with dual license plates of the Mainland and Hong Kong) issued with Lok Ma Chau/Huanggang Port Closed Road Permits (i.e. Permits) will be allowed to use the Lok Ma Chau Control Point between midnight and 6.30am daily from the first day of the Lunar New Year (February 10) to the fifth day of the Lunar New Year (February 14). Other cross-boundary private cars holding Permits for Shenzhen Bay, Man Kam To and Sha Tau Kok Ports must use the Shenzhen Bay Port or the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (Hong Kong Port) instead during these periods. Cross-boundary private cars issued with Lok Ma Chau/Huanggang Port Closed Road Permits may also use the Shenzhen Bay Port or the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (Hong Kong Port). The TD will inform relevant cross-boundary private car permit holders of the arrangement via SMS.

The TD anticipates that a large amount of passengers will use public transport services to cross the boundary via various land-based Boundary Control Points during the Lunar New Year Eve and Lunar New Year holiday, and that the waiting time for cross-boundary public transport services may be longer than usual. Passengers waiting for public transport services are advised to observe order and follow the advice of the Police and staff of the public transport operators on-site. Cross-boundary coach passengers are also advised to plan their journeys ahead and reserve tickets in advance.

A spokesman for the TD specially reminded the public that "on the night of the second day of the Lunar New Year (February 11), only the service of the MTR East Rail Line plying between Admiralty and Lo Wu will be extended, while other MTR lines and the connecting public transport services will maintain their normal operating hours. Members of the public are advised to pay attention to the details of the public transport services concerned, and plan their journeys ahead. They may contact the relevant public transport operators if needed.

"The Government encourages visitors to carefully plan their itinerary, which includes considering an overnight stay in Hong Kong and avoiding departure via land boundary control points in the small hours, to enjoy a more diversified travel experience in Hong Kong."

Details of the special boundary-crossing arrangements and associated public transport services during the Lunar New Year holidays are available at the TD's website
[\(www.td.gov.hk/en/transport_in_hong_kong/land_based_cross_boundary_transport/](http://www.td.gov.hk/en/transport_in_hong_kong/land_based_cross_boundary_transport/)

Special traffic arrangements on Lok Ma Chau and Shenzhen Bay Boundary Control Point during Lunar New Year period

In response to the special boundary-crossing arrangements between February 9 and 13 as earlier announced by the Government, Police today (February 8) reminds motorists that special traffic arrangements on Lok Ma Chau and Shenzhen Bay Boundary Control Point will be implemented during the above period, to facilitate members of the public and tourists.

Depending on traffic conditions, the following special traffic arrangements will be implemented by phases:

Lok Ma Chau Boundary Control Point

Phase I

All vehicles will use the existing driving routes to enter the boundary control point.

Phase II

- The traffic arrangements for cross-boundary private cars and goods vehicles remain unchanged, they will continue to enter the boundary control point through the Passenger Vehicles Lanes via San Tin Interchange or the Goods Vehicles Lanes respectively;
- Public transport vehicles including cross-boundary buses, minibuses and taxis will use the Goods Vehicles Lanes on eastbound San Tin Highway or westbound Fanling Highway to enter the goods vehicle holding area via San Sham Road;
- Lok Ma Chau – Huanggang Cross-boundary shuttle buses will enter Castle Peak Road after leaving Lok Ma Chau Public Transport Interchange, and will be instructed to turn right to the Goods Vehicles lanes of San Sham Road to enter the goods vehicle holding area; and
- Vehicles in the goods vehicle holding area will be instructed to proceed to their respective drop-off areas.

Phase III

- In addition to the traffic arrangements implemented in Phase II, cross-boundary private cars will be instructed to enter the designated waiting

area; and

- Vehicles in the designated waiting area will be instructed to proceed to the clearance area for departure procedures.

Shenzhen Bay Boundary Control Point

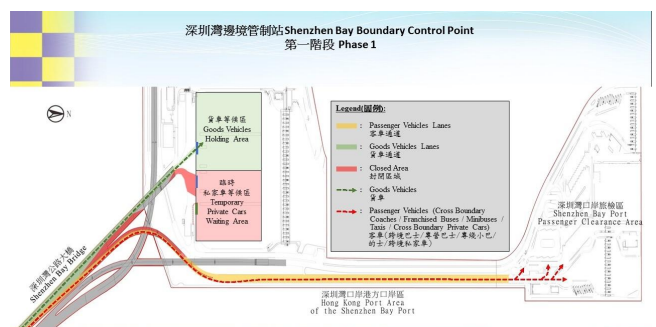
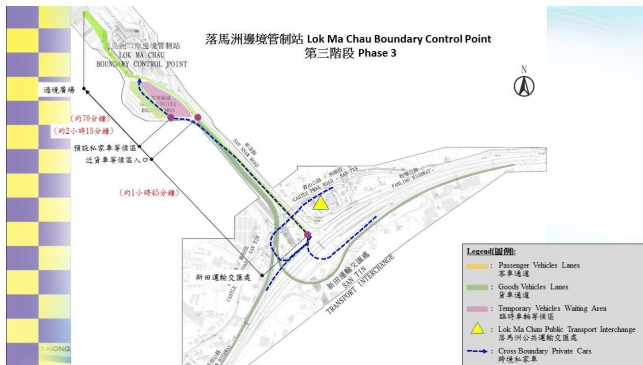
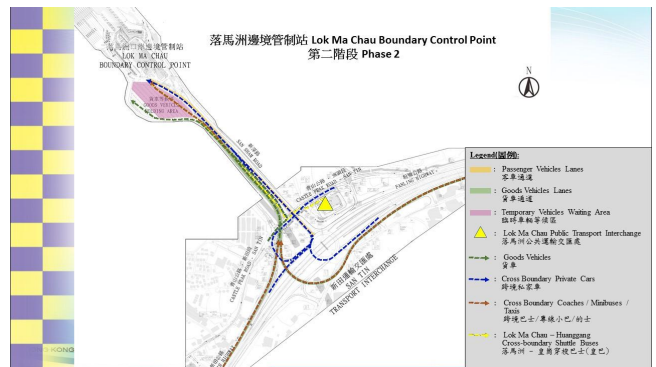
Phase I

All vehicles will use the existing driving routes to enter the boundary control point.

Phase II

- The traffic arrangements for goods vehicles remain unchanged, they will continue to enter the holding area awaiting clearance through the Goods Vehicles Lanes;
- Public transport vehicles, including cross-boundary buses, franchised buses, minibuses and taxis will continue to enter the boundary control point through the Passenger Vehicles Lanes as usual; and
- Cross-boundary private cars must keep left on the Shenzhen Bay Bridge and then enter the designated waiting area through the Goods Vehicles Lanes. Private cars will queue up and await further instructions to proceed to the clearance area for departure procedures.

Police will continue traffic enforcement action during the Lunar New Year period. Motorists are advised to exercise tolerance and patience and take heed of instructions of the Police on site.



深圳灣邊境管制站 Shenzhen Bay Boundary Control Point
第二階段 Phase 2

