

Hong Kong Customs seizes suspected mitragynine worth about \$39 million (with photos)

Hong Kong Customs yesterday (June 26) seized about 14.5 tonnes of suspected mitragynine with an estimated market value of about \$39 million at the Kwai Chung Customhouse Cargo Examination Compound.

Through risk assessment, Customs yesterday selected for inspection a 20-foot seaborne container, declared as carrying mitragyna speciosa and arriving from Indonesia en route to America via Hong Kong. Upon examination, Customs officers found 580 carton boxes containing green powders suspected to be mitragynine inside the container. The powders were packed in transparent plastic bags of different sizes.

An investigation is ongoing.

Mitragynine is the major compound available in a plant known as mitragyna speciosa (also known as kratom). If mitragynine is abused, it may cause health effects including nausea, constipation, increased urination, loss of appetite, seizures, hallucinations and withdrawal symptoms.

Customs reminds importers, exporters and the logistics industry that importation of dangerous drugs requires an import licence and import certificate issued by the Department of Health. A valid export authorisation or diversion certificate from the exporting country will also be required. Transshipment of dangerous drugs also requires a removal licence issued by the Department of Health.

Under the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance, trafficking in a dangerous drug is a serious offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$5 million and life imprisonment.

Members of the public may report any suspected drug trafficking activities 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/).



[Effective Exchange Rate Index](#)

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Thursday, June 27, 2024 is 106.9 (up 0.1 against yesterday's index).

[HKO and SCHSA remind public to beware of extremely hot weather \(with photo\)](#)

The Hong Kong Observatory (HKO) and the Senior Citizen Home Safety Association (SCHSA) held a joint press conference today (June 27) to remind the public to get prepared for the very hot weather in summer.

The Acting Assistant Director of the HKO, Mr Cheng Yuen-chung, reminded the public, especially the elderly, "The Very Hot Weather Warning has been in

force for more than seven days since its issuance on June 20, and the weather in Hong Kong is persistently very hot. The temperature at the HKO on Summer Solstice last Friday reached 34.0 degrees, the highest so far this year and equalling the record high for Summer Solstice set in 1980. Under the influence of the subtropical ridge, high temperatures weather will continue today and tomorrow over southern China including Hong Kong, and may reach the extremely hot level (35.0 degrees or above). Members of the public should pay attention to the changes in weather and take adequate protective measures against the heat." He further explained, "When the Very Hot Weather Warning is in force, if the temperature generally reaches the extremely hot level or when high temperatures weather lasts for a few days, the HKO will issue Special Weather Tips and deliver them by push notification through the 'MyObservatory' mobile application to alert the public to the 'extremely hot weather' or 'prolonged heat' and to take appropriate precautions."

The Chief Executive Officer of the SCHSA, Ms Maura Wong, said, "During the recent persistently very hot weather, the SCHSA has seen a significant increase in the number of help requests from the elderly and recorded a surge of over 20 per cent in the number of elderly individuals being sent to hospitals within a week. The elderly are one of the groups more vulnerable to heat stroke, especially those living in cramped homes without air conditioning, as well as the elderly with chronic illness, and those elderly singletons or elderly doubletons. We urge the elderly and their families to remain vigilant in very hot weather to prevent heat stroke. If they feel unwell, they should immediately seek help through the 'Care-on-Call' service or seek medical advice. Given that extreme weather is becoming more frequent, we call on the public to proactively care for the elderly around them and remind the elderly to pay attention to the weather conditions and take precautionary measures."

For more information on protection against the heat, please visit the following websites:

The HKO on precautions of the Very Hot Weather Warning:

www.hko.gov.hk/en/wservice/warning/coldhot.htm

The Department of Health "Beware of Heat Stroke":

www.chp.gov.hk/en/static/90064.html

The Labour Department "Prevention of Heat Stroke at Work":

www.labour.gov.hk/eng/news/prevention_of_heat_stroke_at_work.htm

The Home Affairs Department on temporary heat shelters:

www.had.gov.hk/en/public_services/emergency_services/emergency.htm



[Collaboration between BDF and HKMA unlocks new CBDC cross-border opportunities \(with photo\)](#)

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority:

The Banque de France (BDF) and the Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) are pleased to announce today (June 27) their collaboration relating to wholesale central bank digital currency (CBDC).

The BDF and the HKMA have been maintaining a close partnership in promoting financial innovation. The latest collaboration is the HKMA's participation in Wave 2 of the European Central Bank (ECB)'s Eurosystem exploratory work (Note 1), marking an important milestone as a major central banking institution outside the Eurosystem participating in the initiative. The two central banking institutions recently entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), which signified a step forward in bilateral cooperation to foster innovation in wholesale CBDC and tokenisation market.

The two central banking institutions will delve into the study of interoperability between their wholesale CBDC infrastructure, i.e. the BDF's DL3S (Note 2) and the HKMA's Project Ensemble Sandbox (Note 3), with the main focus on real-time cross-border and cross-currency payments. The cross-border experiment aims to explore how to optimise settlement efficiency of cross-border transactions, and facilitate interoperability between financial market infrastructures in different jurisdictions.

Under the MoU, the BDF and the HKMA agree to strengthen communication and collaboration, as well as to lay the foundations for further efforts on tokenisation and new technologies.

First Deputy Governor of the BDF Mr Denis Beau said, "As we have set the clear objective to improve cross-border payments, we have the opportunity

brought by the Eurosystem exploratory work to collaborate with the HKMA on different use cases for payment versus payment between the tokenised form of the Hong Kong dollar and the Euro. The HKMA's recent announcement for the launch of Project Ensemble was very timely to initiate this cooperation. We look forward to further testing our DL3S platform in this context and hope that together we can facilitate the financial inclusion expected from enhanced cross-border payments."

Deputy Chief Executive of the HKMA Mr Howard Lee said, "It is evident that there is a huge potential for collaboration between France and Hong Kong in various areas. Particularly in the Fintech sector, both the BDF and the HKMA have well proven themselves as pioneers in the field of CBDC. The HKMA announced Project Ensemble early this year to explore innovative financial market infrastructure that will facilitate seamless interbank settlement of tokenised money through wholesale CBDC. With the collaboration between BDF's DL3S and the HKMA's Project Ensemble Sandbox underway, we look forward to joining hands with the BDF to further explore different cross-border payment solutions and use cases, to promote financial market connectivity and push forward the development of the global tokenisation market."

Note 1: The ECB's Eurosystem exploratory work involves the exploration of new technologies for wholesale central bank money settlement in the form of trials with actual settlement in central bank money and experiments with mock settlement in a test environment. Please refer to the ECB's website (www.ecb.europa.eu/paym/integration/distributed/exploratory/html/index.en.html) for more details.

Note 2: Distributed Ledger for Securities Settlement System. Please refer to the ECB's website (www.ecb.europa.eu/press/intro/news/ecb.mipnews231213_annex2.en.pdf) for more details on the BDF's Full DLT Interoperability Solution (also known as DL3S).

Note 3: The Project Ensemble Sandbox will further research and test tokenisation use cases that include, among others, settlement of tokenised real world assets (e.g. green bonds, carbon credits, aircraft, electric vehicle charging stations, electronic bills of lading and treasury management). Please refer to the HKMA's Project Ensemble webpage (www.hkma.gov.hk/eng/key-functions/international-financial-centre/fintech/central-bank-digital-currency) for more details.



Inspection of aquatic products imported from Japan

In response to the Japanese Government's plan to discharge nuclear-contaminated water at the Fukushima Nuclear Power Station, the Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene issued a Food Safety Order which prohibits all aquatic products, sea salt and seaweeds originating from the 10 metropolis/prefectures, namely Tokyo, Fukushima, Ibaraki, Miyagi, Chiba, Gunma, Tochigi, Niigata, Nagano and Saitama, from being imported into and supplied in Hong Kong.

For other Japanese aquatic products, sea salt and seaweeds that are not prohibited from being imported into Hong Kong, the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department will conduct comprehensive radiological tests to verify that the radiation levels of these products do not exceed the guideline levels before they are allowed to be supplied in the market.

As the discharge of nuclear-contaminated water is unprecedented and will continue for 30 years or more, the Government will closely monitor and step up the testing arrangements. Should anomalies be detected, the Government does not preclude further tightening the scope of the import ban.

From noon on June 26 to noon today (June 27), the CFS conducted tests on the radiological levels of 204 food samples imported from Japan, which were of the "aquatic and related products, seaweeds and sea salt" category. No sample was found to have exceeded the safety limit. Details can be found on the CFS's thematic website titled "Control Measures on Foods Imported from Japan"

(www.cfs.gov.hk/english/programme/programme_rafs/programme_rafs_fc_01_30_Nuclear_Event_and_Food_Safety.html).

In parallel, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) has also tested 50 samples of local catch for radiological levels. All the samples passed the tests. Details can be found on the AFCD's website (www.afcd.gov.hk/english/fisheries/Radiological_testing/Radiological_Test.html).

The Hong Kong Observatory (HKO) has also enhanced the environmental monitoring of the local waters. No anomaly has been detected so far. For details, please refer to the HKO's website (www.hko.gov.hk/en/radiation/monitoring/seawater.html).

From August 24 to noon today, the CFS and the AFCD have conducted tests on the radiological levels of 62 768 samples of food imported from Japan (including 40 637 samples of aquatic and related products, seaweeds and sea salt) and 15 292 samples of local catch respectively. All the samples passed the tests.