

Hong Kong Customs detects smuggling case involving about \$100 million of goods by ocean-going vessel (with photos)

Hong Kong Customs on April 4 detected a suspected case of using an ocean-going vessel to smuggle goods to Malaysia at the Kwai Chung Container Terminals. A large batch of suspected smuggled electronic components, goods and waste, with a total estimated market value of about \$100 million, was seized.

Through intelligence analysis and risk assessment, Customs discovered that criminals intended to use ocean-going vessels to smuggle goods and thus formulated strategies to combat related activities, and identified an ocean-going vessel preparing to depart from Hong Kong to Malaysia for inspection.

Customs officers on April 4 mounted an operation and seized a large batch of suspected smuggled goods, including integrated circuits, computer servers, routers, together with a batch of electronic waste, inside a container which was declared as containing aluminum alloy aboard the vessel.

After a follow-up investigation, Customs officers arrested a 53-year-old woman suspected to be connected with the case the next day (April 5).

An investigation is ongoing. The arrested woman has been released on bail pending further investigation and the likelihood of further arrests is not ruled out.

Customs is the primary agency responsible for the suppression of smuggling activities and has all along been combating various smuggling activities at the forefront. Customs will keep up its enforcement action and continue to fiercely combat sea smuggling activities through proactive risk management and intelligence-based enforcement strategies, along with mounting targeted anti-smuggling operations at suitable times to land a solid blow against relevant activities.

Smuggling is a serious offence. Under the Import and Export Ordinance, any person found guilty of importing or exporting unmanifested cargo is liable to a maximum fine of \$2 million and imprisonment for seven years.

Under the Waste Disposal Ordinance, it is an offence for anyone to import or export hazardous waste without obtaining a valid permit beforehand. First-time offenders are liable to a maximum fine of \$200,000 and six months' imprisonment. For subsequent offences, offenders are liable to a fine of \$500,000 and two years' imprisonment.

Members of the public may report any suspected smuggling 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/).



[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 April 16 to noon today (April 17), the CFS conducted tests on the radiological levels of 300 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 43 434 samples of food imported from Japan (including 28 636 samples of aquatic and related products, seaweeds and sea salt) and 11 732 samples of local catch respectively. All the samples passed the tests.

Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Wednesday, April 17, 2024 is 106.1 (down 0.2 against yesterday's index).

SEE's opening remarks on environment and ecology at LegCo Finance Committee

special meeting

Following is the English translation of the opening remarks by the Secretary for Environment and Ecology, Mr Tse Chin-wan, on environment and ecology at the special meeting of the Legislative Council Finance Committee today (April 17):

Chairman,

As the Financial Secretary emphasised in the Budget, "green development is a defining feature of high quality development". To align with our country's "dual carbon" goals, Hong Kong will continue to implement various decarbonisation strategies and measures, and develop green tech innovation and other industries to promote the cultivation of a green and low-carbon production mode and lifestyle, thereby endeavouring to achieve carbon neutrality before 2050 and halving carbon emissions before 2035 from the 2005 level.

In respect of innovative technology, the Green Tech Fund (GTF) has already approved 30 research and development projects, involving a total grant of about \$130 million. The projects cut across a wide array of subjects, such as production and storage of hydrogen fuel. The GTF helps the industry develop environmental protection technologies with commercialisation and application values, expediting the low-carbon transformation in Hong Kong. Furthermore, we will launch the pilot scheme on building-integrated photovoltaics at the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department headquarters to explore photovoltaic technology applications on the facades of government buildings. We will also support public and private organisations to use renewable energy to help Hong Kong realise carbon neutrality.

As for new-energy transport, to continue promoting the popularisation of electric vehicles (EVs), this year's Budget announced that the first registration tax concession arrangement for EVs will be extended for two years. We will also continue to promote the trials of new-energy transport technologies, riding on the progress made in recent years such as the commencement of services of the first hydrogen fuel cell bus in February. On infrastructure support, the number of parking spaces with charging infrastructure will jump to about 200 000 by mid-2027. We are rigorously following up with petrol filling station (PFS) operators on the latter's plan to retrofit quick charging facilities at PFSs and will formulate a citywide green transformation roadmap for public buses and taxis within this year.

As regards the promotion of waste reduction and recycling, the first phase of regulation on disposable plastic products will be implemented on April 22, i.e. next Monday, which is Earth Day. According to the Environmental Protection Department's (EPD) recent understanding with the trade, there is a steady and sufficient supply of non-plastic alternatives to tableware and hotel toiletries in the market, and we have recently noticed

that most of the major restaurant chains have switched to alternatives or will do so from the implementation date, reflecting that the trade is well-prepared for the regulation. Upon the implementation of the new legislation, the EPD will adopt a progressive enforcement model by arranging staff to inspect relevant business premises during the six-month adaptation period, focusing on promotion and education, and providing appropriate advice to assist businesses in complying with the requirements under the new legislation.

Over a period of time, the community has expressed many views and concerns about the implementation of and arrangements for the legislation on municipal solid waste (MSW) charging. These comments are from various sectors of the community, including frontline workers, restaurants, residential care homes as well as different trades and industries. The Government has heard these voices. As a responsible and people-oriented government, we must have a clear understanding of the impact of MSW charging on different sectors of the community, and the problems associated with the introduction of MSW charging. Therefore, we have launched the Demonstration Scheme to pragmatically, thoroughly and in detail examine the problems that may arise during the implementation of MSW charging. The Deputy Chief Secretary for Administration is leading an interdepartmental steering group to oversee the work of the Demonstration Scheme as a whole and review its outcome. This will allow the Government to have a comprehensive understanding of the overall situation to pragmatically plan and take forward the next step. At the same time, the Government will continue to strengthen the support for recycling.

Last but not least, the Government is committed to conserving Hong Kong's natural ecology and enriching visitors' experience in the countryside. On March 1 this year, the Robin's Nest Country Park was formally established, becoming the 25th country park. We expect the statutory procedures for designating the eighth marine park, namely the North Lantau Marine Park, would be completed this year. In addition, the Countryside Conservation Office protects the natural ecology, revitalises village architectural environments and conserves cultural resources and historical heritage in remote countrysides through implementation of the Countryside Conservation Funding Scheme and minor improvement works projects. We expect that smart countryside conservation trails will be established this year at Lai Chi Wo, Mui Tsz Lam and Kuk Po in Sha Tau Kok. We will also take forward the work for the establishment of the Wetland Conservation Parks System in the Northern Metropolis, and will first establish the Sam Po Shue Wetland Conservation Park. In this regard, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department is conducting a strategic feasibility study which is expected to be completed in the first half of this year.

My colleagues and I are happy to listen to Members' views and respond to questions.

SCST to visit Venice

The Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Mr Kevin Yeung, will depart for Venice, Italy, on April 19 (Friday) early morning. He will officiate at the opening ceremony of the Hong Kong exhibition at the Venice Biennale organised by the Hong Kong Arts Development Council and the M+ museum of the West Kowloon Cultural District. He will visit the China Pavilion and pavilions of other regions.

Mr Yeung will conclude the trip on April 21 (Sunday) evening and return to Hong Kong. During his absence, the Under Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Mr Raistlin Lau, will be the Acting Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism.