

Travellers sentenced to imprisonment for smuggling agarwood (with photo)

Two travellers who smuggled agarwood have been sentenced to imprisonment for 16 months at the District Court today (February 8).

A spokesman of the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) said that Customs officers intercepted two inbound male passengers, aged 51 and 32, at Hong Kong International Airport and seized about 17 kilograms and 24kg of agarwood from their luggage on August 16, 2018.

Upon investigation by the AFCD, the two men were charged with illegal import of an endangered species. They were convicted at the court on February 4. The court handed down 24 months' imprisonment as the starting point for sentencing today. The defendants were each sentenced to 16 months behind bars after one-third reduction as they pleaded guilty.

All species of *Aquilaria* are listed in Appendix II to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. They are regulated under the Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance.

The penalties under the Ordinance have been drastically increased since May 1 last year. Any person importing, exporting or possessing specimens of endangered species not in accordance with the Ordinance will be liable to a maximum fine of \$10 million and imprisonment for 10 years. The specimens will also be forfeited upon conviction.

To enquire about the control of endangered species and to report suspected irregularities, the public can call the AFCD at 1823 or visit the website www.cites.hk.

