

Customs News

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The Commissioner Speaks

Since assuming the position of Commissioner of Customs and Excise in July last year, I have come to appreciate that Customs service covers a wide range of activities and responsibilities that are not only closely related to the daily life of the community but also important to maintaining social stability and economic development. One of the main tasks of Customs is to be a good gate-keeper preventing contraband goods, drugs and prohibited articles from entering the boundary of Hong Kong. It is not difficult to imagine the serious harm to society and the difficulty of eradicating them if contraband articles and illicit drugs were not intercepted promptly by our officers at the control points. It is therefore of utmost

importance that all our Customs officers should exercise dedication and commitment in performing their daily duties, in safeguarding the integrity of our boundaries, and in tackling smuggling activities.



To ensure that the Hong Kong Customs maintains its effectiveness and efficiency, apart from equipping the Department with new equipment and latest technology, human resources development is a key



During the visit to the Hong Kong Air Cargo Terminals Super Terminal 1, Commissioner of Customs and Excise, Mr Richard Yuen (third left), chats with two Probationary Customs Officers on their daily challenge of maintaining effective and efficient air cargo clearance. Standing next to Mr Yuen are Acting Head of Airport Command, Mr Ken Wong (third right); Acting Group Head (Air Cargo), Mr Tang Wai-kuen (second right); and Divisional Commander (Air Cargo (Import))1, Mr Wong Hung-san (first right).



Commissioner of Customs and Excise, Mr Richard Yuen (second left), meets a Probationary Customs Officer at the Staff Exit Channel and learns how she settles down with the customs work. Accompanied Mr Yuen are Acting Head of Airport Command, Mr Ken Wong (third right); Group Head (Air Passenger and Apron), Mr Ki Wai-leung (second right); and Divisional Commander (Airport Apron), Mr Kong Chin-hung (first right).

to better service. That's why I pay particular attention to the working condition and the pressure and challenge faced by our colleagues. I hope that by working together we can promote cohesion and team spirit in the Department so that we all feel proud of being a member of the Hong Kong Customs.

I am pleased that after the recruitment freeze, in 2007-08 we provided 20-week-long induction training courses for a total of 365 newly recruited Customs Officers. They are the new blood and future backbone of the Department. After completion of basic training, these young officers are being deployed to different formations to gain experience of the wide range of Customs duties.

To see how they fit in with the Department and better understand their work and expectations, I made an effort to visit some of the frontline Probationary Customs Officers at the Airport Command recently.

These Probationary Customs Officers completed the induction training course in October last year and were posted to the Airport Command after working

in other posts for a short period of time. They are performing different duties at the Airport Command including cargo clearance, baggage control and inspection, and manning the exit channels for airport staff, etc. I am very impressed by their proactive attitude in taking up new challenges and the vigour and vitality that they have brought to the Service. I am also very impressed by the patience and dedication of the senior colleagues who have made a personal effort to coach and assist these younger officers in settling down in the new environment. It is heartening to see that colleagues of different seniority and ranks work hand in hand to serve the community.

We Attach Importance to Human Resources

It cannot be over-emphasised that human resources are the single most important asset of the Department. Human resources development therefore must always take first priority in departmental management.

In the face of rapid economic development and social changes, we have to keep up with the times and maintain the competitiveness of Hong Kong.

The Department has adopted a "competency-based" human resources development strategy. We not only provide continuous on-the-job technical training but also personal development and supervisory management courses to raise the professional standards of all staff. In addition, we offer many overseas training opportunities to help broaden the horizons of our officers.

To enable new officers to cope with the challenges of their work, in addition to standardised basic induction training, individual formations also offer tailor-made courses to meet their specific operational needs. These include online orientation courses and a "mentorship programme" which enables experienced colleagues to coach new recruits so that they can more quickly adapt to the new working environment.

The Department places great emphasis on the career development of all staff. With increased workload and complexity of Customs work, I encourage all officers to take full advantage of these training opportunities and develop a habit of "life-long learning" so that we are all better equipped to take on the new challenges.

On staff promotion, the Department will strictly abide by the "merit based" principle and select the most suitable candidates for promotion based on performance and without favour or prejudice. We will ensure that all those officers who give their best to their job will be recognised and given an opportunity to realise their aspiration and potential. The Grade Structure Review for Disciplined Service currently undertaken by the Standing Committee on Disciplined Services Salaries and Conditions of Service will be completed shortly and I hope the Review will produce positive recommendations to address those issues that are of great concern to our colleagues such as working hours and promotion prospects. In addition to ensuring that the Standing Committee will give due consideration to these issues, the Department will do all it can within our ability and existing resources to try to improve the situation.

The management welcomes the views and suggestions of colleagues. As I have said to the Probationary Customs Officers, any views from the colleagues are most welcome. They can be forwarded to the formation heads or if necessary to me direct by email. In future, I will make an effort to visit different formations of the Department on a regular basis, which I believe is important to promote good communication within the Department and ensure that I can always hear your views.

While we are delighted to welcome some 300 new colleagues to the Department, we are also sad to bid farewell to those colleagues who have retired or will retire shortly. They include Deputy Commissioner, Mr Wong Sau-pui; Chief Superintendents, Mr Chan Hon-kit and Mr Ko Chiu-lok; Superintendents, Mr Ip Che-wo, Mr Hui Chiu-chun and Mr Ho Pei-lok. These colleagues have dedicated a lifelong career to serving the Department. They have made enormous contributions to the Department and laid a solid foundation for its future development. I hope all of us can look to them as our role model and continue the fine tradition of Hong Kong Customs by serving the community with dedication and commitment. On behalf of the Department, I thank them all and wish them good health and happy retirement.

Hong Kong Customs faces many new challenges. The Department needs to work together to constantly strive for excellence and improve the quality of service to the community. Our mission is to strike a balance between effective enforcement and trade facilitation and our guiding principle is "vision and innovation".

Richard Yuen
Commissioner

HK Customs Forges Closer Co-operation With Counterparts

HK Customs Teams Up With Japan Customs

The Commissioner of Hong Kong Customs and Excise, Mr Richard Yuen, and the Director-General of Japan Customs and Tariff Bureau, Mr Yukiyasu Aoyama, signed the Customs Co-operative Arrangement on January 8, 2008.



Commissioner of Hong Kong Customs and Excise, Mr Richard Yuen (left), and Director-General of Japan Customs and Tariff Bureau, Mr Yukiyasu Aoyama, sign a Customs Co-operative Arrangement to strengthen co-operation in fighting transnational customs crimes.

The Arrangement signifies the mutual commitment of Hong Kong and Japanese Customs to working more closely in fighting transnational crimes, such as smuggling and drug trafficking, and protecting intellectual property rights, Mr Yuen said.

HK Customs Joins Hands With New Zealand Customs

To enhance co-operation with the New Zealand Customs, Mr Yuen signed a joint communiqué for

closer co-operation with the Comptroller of New Zealand Customs Service, Mr Martyn Dunne, on April 10, 2008.

Under the communiqué, both sides agree to continue with the "Immediate Notification Mechanism" for prompt exchange of intelligence to combat transnational customs offences, to enhance co-operation in intelligence analysis and risk management, and to organise training and reciprocal visits.

Commenting on the close relationship between Hong Kong and New Zealand Customs, Mr Yuen said, "New Zealand Customs is the first signatory party of the Customs Co-operative Arrangement with Hong Kong Customs. The arrangement dates back to 1991."



Commissioner of Hong Kong Customs and Excise, Mr Richard Yuen (left), and the Comptroller of New Zealand Customs Service, Mr Martyn Dunne, sign a joint communiqué for closer co-operation.

Customs Liaison Bureau

Commissioner Meets Heads Of Customs Administrations Of Asia Pacific Region

Commissioner of Customs and Excise, Mr Richard Yuen, attended the 12th World Customs Organization (WCO) Asia Pacific Regional Heads of Customs Administrations Conference from April 14 to 17, 2008 in New Delhi, India.

At the conference, about 70 delegates from members of the WCO Asia Pacific Region met and discussed areas of regional concern. Representatives from the WCO, WCO's Regional Intelligence Liaison

Office for Asia and the Pacific, WCO's Regional Office for Capacity Building, United Nations Environment Programme and University of Canberra also attended the conference as observers.

Various topics were covered at the conference, including Capacity Building, WCO Provisional Standards Employed by Customs for Uniform Rights Enforcement (SECURE) Intellectual Property Rights Programme, Authorised Economic Operator,



Commissioner of Hong Kong Customs and Excise, Mr Richard Yuen (centre), Head of Customs Liaison Bureau, Mr Liu Cheung-shing (right) and Divisional Commander (WCO and APEC), Mr Fan Chi-kong (left), at the 12th World Customs Organization Asia Pacific Regional Heads of Customs Administrations Conference.

Commercial Fraud, Progress/Implementation of WCO Framework of Standards to Secure and Facilitate Global Trade (SAFE FoS), US 100% Container Scanning Initiative, Customs in 21st Century, and WCO Copyright Policy.

On the front of capacity building, Mr Yuen briefed the delegates about the upcoming training seminar to be held in the WCO Regional Training Centre in Hong Kong in July, 2008.

Accompanying Mr Yuen to the conference were Head of Customs Liaison Bureau (CLB), Mr Liu Cheung-shing; Divisional Commander (WCO and APEC), Mr Fan Chi-kong; and Senior Inspector of CLB, Mr Chui Chi-fai.

Customs Liaison Bureau

EC / HK, China Joint Customs Co-operation Committee Meeting



Commissioner of Hong Kong Customs and Excise, Mr Richard Yuen (sixth right, front row), and Commissioner of Taxation and Customs Union of the European Commission, Mr Laszlo Kovacs (fifth left, front row), with participants of the meeting.

The 7th Meeting of the European Community (EC)/Hong Kong, China Joint Customs Co-operation Committee was held in Hong Kong on January 30, 2008 to discuss topics of mutual interest.

Officiating at the ceremony were the Commissioner of Hong Kong Customs and Excise, Mr Richard Yuen, and the Commissioner of Taxation and Customs Union of the European Commission, Mr Laszlo Kovacs.

"The biennial meeting will strengthen co-operation between Hong Kong Customs and EU," Mr Yuen said, "In the face of challenges brought about by globalisation and the emergence of new markets, Customs authorities have to balance the work of trade facilitation with the fight against illegal activities through closer co-operation and experience sharing."

Sharing the view that mutual co-operation was crucial to effective customs enforcement, EC



Assistant Commissioner (Boundary and Ports), Mr Chow Kwong (fourth right, front row), with the Commissioner of Taxation and Customs Union of the European Commission, Mr Laszlo Kovacs (fifth right, front row), and the other delegates at Passenger Terminal Building of Shenzhen Bay Control Point.

representatives expressed their appreciation of the assistance rendered by Hong Kong Customs to EU members in combating commercial fraud.

During the meeting, representatives of Hong Kong Customs and EC, led respectively by Acting Assistant Commissioner (Excise and Strategic Support), Mr Alex Liu, and the Director-General of the Taxation and Customs Union of the European Commission, Mr Robert Verrue, exchanged views on various supply chain security initiatives, such as Smart and Secure Trade Lanes, Authorised Economic Operator Program and the United States Initiative on 100% Scanning Container. They also shared with

each other the experience of intellectual property rights protection.

Visit to Shenzhen Bay Control Point

Other programme of the meeting also included a visit of EC delegation to Shenzhen Bay Control Point on January 31, 2008.

The delegation was received by Assistant Commissioner (Boundary and Ports), Mr Chow Kwong; Acting Head of Land Boundary Command, Mr Chow Chi-kwong, and Deputy Head of Land Boundary Command (Shenzhen Bay), Mr Law Man-wai.

The delegates were given an overview of customs clearance procedures and the operation of "co-location" arrangement, which was newly implemented at the control point.

Under the "co-location" arrangement, Hong Kong Customs and Mainland Customs each conducts its own processing formalities according to its own laws and regulations at designated areas in the control point.

Customs Liaison Bureau Shenzhen Bay Control Point

APEC Sub-Committee On Customs Procedures Meeting

Assistant Commissioner (Excise and Strategic Support), Mr Yu Koon-hing, and Group Head (Customs Liaison), Mr Ng Yan-kwong, attended the 2008 1st APEC Sub-Committee on Customs Procedures (SCCP) Meeting to discuss the latest development of regional customs procedures.

The Meeting was held in Peru from February 21 to 24, 2008, with 78 delegates of 20 member economies participating.

The mission of SCCP is to simplify and harmonise regional customs procedures to ensure that goods move efficiently, effectively and safely throughout the region, and to facilitate border control.



Assistant Commissioner (Excise and Strategic Support), Mr Yu Koon-hing (right), and Group Head (Customs Liaison), Mr Ng Yan-kwong (left), at the 2008 1st APEC Sub-committee on Customs Procedures Meeting.

During the meeting, SCCP set out the priorities and actions for 2008. These included enhancing trade facilitation and secure trade, strengthening intellectual property rights (IPR) enforcement, and improving organisational transparency.

"Hong Kong Customs has been constantly enhancing its facilities and streamlining procedures to increase clearance efficiency," Mr Yu said.

"We are delighted to take part in the Friends of the Chair Group which provides an opportunity for

us to work closely with other members in identifying achievable single-year goals for endorsement at the SCCP meeting."

Implementation progress of various initiatives, including Trade Facilitation Action Plan (TFAP) II, Single Window Initiatives, Time-Release Survey, APEC Framework for Secure Trade and Authorised Economic Operators, was also covered at the meeting.

Customs Liaison Bureau

Air Cargo Operators Benefit From Enhanced Clearance Efficiency

Hong Kong Customs and UPS Parcel Delivery Service Ltd (UPS) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) under the "Release Goods Before Duty Payment Scheme" on December 18, 2007. UPS is the fourth global air cargo operator taking part in the Scheme after DHL, TNT and FedEx.



Assistant Commissioner (Boundary and Ports), Mr Chow Kwong (right), exchanges the Memorandum of Understanding under the "Release Goods Before Duty Payment Scheme" with Managing Director of UPS (HK and Macau), Mr Leung Kwok-kee.

The Scheme, launched by Hong Kong Customs in 2004, is a trade facilitation initiative for enhancing customs clearance efficiency by streamlining the duty payment procedure on dutiable commodities transported by air cargo operators.

Under the Scheme, participating cargo operators have to furnish a security bond to Hong Kong Customs. After being issued with a general demand note on the duty, the cargo operators can remove imported dutiable goods and are allowed to settle the duty payment within two working days through various payment methods including Internet banking. The Scheme helps reduce the holding time of the dutiable goods at the airport before they are delivered to the recipients.

The Scheme signifies the commitment of Hong Kong Customs to providing speedy customs clearance on dutiable commodities while protecting government revenue. As time and speed are critical to the air cargo business, the Scheme benefits not only air cargo operators but also the public using the freight service.

Air Cargo Research Division

Participation Of World Customs Organization Meeting

Hong Kong Customs has been actively participating in World Customs Organization (WCO) Meeting since it became a member in 1987.

WCO Data Model Project Team Meeting & 54th Information Management Sub-committee Meeting

Staff Officer (Information Technology Group One), Mr Keith Wong, and Senior Inspector of Office of Information Technology, Mr Wong Cheuk-yin, learned about the development of the WCO Data Model at the WCO Data Model Project Team Meeting and the 54th Information Management Sub-committee Meeting. The meetings were held at WCO Headquarters in Brussels from January 16 to 25, 2008.

The Data Model provides a framework of standardised and harmonised sets of electronic data, which will ensure effective exchange of information among the Customs authorities and facilitate international trade.

Photo 1: Mr Keith Wong (right) and Mr Wong Cheuk-yin at the meetings.

WCO Meetings On Enforcement & Technical Issues

Head of Intelligence Bureau, Mr David Fong, and Inspector of Customs Liaison Bureau, Ms Rachel Fong, attended four WCO meetings, namely the 27th Session of the Enforcement Committee, the 8th Meeting of the Administrative Committee for the Istanbul Convention, the 4th Meeting of the Management Committee on the Revised Kyoto Convention and the 181st/182nd Sessions of the Permanent Technical Committee, in Brussels from February 25 to March 7, 2008.

During the Enforcement Committee Session, they discussed with participants of other countries enforcement issues, such as environmental crime, commercial fraud, money laundering, drugs and precursor chemicals. As for the other technical meetings, the latest developments of security and trade facilitation measures were touched on.

Photo 2: Mr David Fong (left) and Ms Rachel Fong at the 27th Session of Enforcement Committee.



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Visits To Counterparts

Hong Kong Customs often arranges officers to visit overseas counterparts, exchange information and share experiences with other Customs administrations.

Visit To UK Customs For Open Bond System

Assistant Staff Officer (Excise Compliance and Audit), Mr Chan Kwai-wing; Senior Inspector, Ms Leung Ka-man; and Inspector, Mr Cheng King-tong, studied how Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) monitored the Open Bond System, particularly the record-keeping requirement for auditing purposes, during their visit to the HMRC's Manchester Office from February 19 to 22, 2008.

The visit would help the Office of Dutiable Commodities Administration evaluate the control of the Open Bond System in Hong Kong.

Under the Open Bond System, Customs officers are not required to station at bonded warehouses to check the movement of dutiable goods for excise control. The protection of excise duties is achieved through stringent licence control, post-transaction audit, surprise compliance checks, as well as supervised loading and unloading of dutiable goods.

Photo 1: Mr Chan Kwai-wing (first right), Mr

Cheng King-tong (first left) and Ms Leung Ka-man (second left) with HMRC officers.

Visits To Australia & Singapore For Risk Management

Officers from Intelligence Bureau drew on the experience of Australian and Singaporean Customs in risk management when they visited the two countries in March, 2008.

Divisional Commander (Risk Management), Mr Vincent Sin, and Inspector, Mr Gary Hung, discussed with the experts of Australian Customs Service (ACS) the use of the latest information infrastructure in risk management. At the same time, Divisional Commander (Strategic Intelligence), Mr Leung Tak-yin, and Senior Inspector, Mr Tung Chi-chiu, shared with Singapore Customs the risk management of cargo clearance - the methodologies and operational problems.

Photo 2: (From left) Mr Gary Hung; Supervisor (Targeting Strategies) of ACS, Mr Alex See; Mr Vincent Sin; and Manager (Targeting Strategies) of ACS, Mr Derek Bopping, in front of Canberra Customs House, Australia.



Visit By Overseas Enforcement Agencies

To strengthen co-operation with counterparts, Hong Kong Customs often receives visiting delegations from Mainland and overseas enforcement agencies.

Indian Coast Guard Delegation visits Customs Marine Base

Head of Ports and Maritime Command, Mr Li Chun-fai, and Acting Divisional Commander (Marine Enforcement), Mr Fok Yui-keung, met with the Indian Coast Guard delegation on December 4, 2007.

Led by its Deputy Inspector General, K Natarajan,

T M, the delegates saw for themselves Customs' work at sea when they were on board a sector patrol launch after a briefing on the work of Marine Enforcement Group.

The delegation was impressed by how Hong Kong Customs made use of the sea-rider type inflatable boats in combating smuggling at sea.

Photo 1: Accompanied by Mr Li Chun-fai (third left) and Mr Fok Yui-keung (first left), the delegation is briefed on the equipment used in combating sea smuggling.



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Training

Hong Kong Customs attaches great importance to staff training and development to maintain the professionalism of the force.

Drug Investigation: CDII Workshop

The Customs Drug Investigation Bureau and US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) jointly organised a four-day workshop on "Customs and DEA Investigation and Intelligence"(CDII) in mid-September 2007.

Through the training of the two professional DEA instructors, the participants had sharpened their investigation skills. Apart from lectures, the workshop included experience sharing sessions, and field training on surveillance techniques and simulated raiding exercises.

Photo 2: Participants learn new raiding tactics at a simulated scene.

Financial Investigation: Customs Inspectors Accredited By UK

Two inspectors of Customs Drug Investigation Bureau, Mr Cheuk Tak-wai, and Mr Wong Tat-tang, obtained the Business and Technician Education Council Professional Certificate in Financial Investigation by the Assets Recovery Agency (ARA) in November 2007.

They are the first batch of Hong Kong Customs officers who obtained the international recognised accreditation for their financial investigation skills.

The officers attained the accreditation after completing the Financial Investigation Course, organised by ARA and Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) in London, and a three-month work assessment in Hong Kong. Apart from lectures, the course provided officers with attachment training in the section of HMRC which handled intelligence and investigation.

Photo 1: Mr Cheuk Tak-wai (first right) and Mr Wong Tat-tang (second right) with the course instructors.

Leadership Training: Leadership Development Programme

Senior Inspector of Airport Command, Mr Leung Sai-kwong, attended the Leadership Development Programme, organised by the International Law Enforcement Academy in Bangkok, Thailand, to boost his management skills and leadership strategies.

Held from January 7 to 11, 2008, the course focused on organisational development, strategic planning, and goal setting for the law enforcement agencies.

Photo 2: Mr Leung Sai-kwong (first right, front row) at a discussion forum.

Narcotics Control: Clandestine Lab Investigations Course

Senior Inspector of Customs Drug Investigation Bureau (CDIB), Mr Mark Woo, and Inspector of CDIB, Mr Michael Wong, learned the prevailing approach in dealing with the clandestine laboratories and precautionary measures in handling the chemicals found therein at a course organised by the International Law Enforcement Academy in Bangkok from January 21 to February 1, 2008. The course drew the participation of the anti-narcotics experts from 11 countries in the Asia Pacific Region.

"The course enabled the participants to build a closer network with each other, and facilitated the exchange of experiences between anti-drug authorities of different regions for clamping down on cross-boundary drug trafficking," Mr Woo said.

Photo 3: Mr Mark Woo (first right), Mr Michael Wong (first left) and the representatives of the Government Laboratory in the protective gear which is required to be put on before they enter the clandestine laboratories. At centre is the instructor, Mr Kevin Blair.



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Other News

Airport Command's Horizon Broadened On Airport Management Worldwide

Officers of Airport Command (APC) officers got a better understanding of the operation and management of airports worldwide, including the partnership among them, when the officers attended the presentation by Regional Director of Airports Council International (Asia-Pacific), Mrs Maggie Kwok, on September 27, 2007.

In light of the latest development of the aviation industry, APC officers were inspired to enhance Customs services at the airport, and establish closer network with other airport Customs administrations to facilitate passenger flow.

The mission of the Airports Council International, an international organisation, is to promote professional excellence in airport management and operations. It

includes 560 members of 1,650 airports which handle about 96% of the passenger flow in the world.

Photo 1: APC officers and Mrs Maggie Kwok (fifth right) at the presentation.

Customs Anti-Piracy Effort Recognised By Japanese Copyright Industry

Head of Intellectual Property Investigation Bureau, Mr Ben Ho, on behalf of Hong Kong Customs and Excise Department received an appreciation plaque from the Chairman of the Content Japan Mark Committee, Mr Takero Goto, on March 19, 2008. The plaque was presented to the department for its anti-piracy effort in the protection of the copyrighted Japanese music, films and TV programmes.

Photo 2: Mr Ben Ho (left) receives an appreciation plaque from Mr Takero Goto.

