

Customs News

2008 December • ISSUE NO.38



The Commissioner Speaks

The summer of 2008 has been a memorable and meaningful time for the Hong Kong Customs. Hong Kong is proud to have co-hosted the 2008 Beijing Olympic Equestrian Events and our success in organising a smooth, safe and secure event has been well recognised by participating athletes, officials, dignitaries and spectators who had come from around the world.

The success of the event has been the joint effort of the Equestrian Company, Government departments and the many volunteers. In this regard, the Hong Kong Customs is pleased to have contributed its effort in providing customs facilitation to the athletes, officials and spectators and in helping to protect the safety and security of the gathering through guarding the control points against the entry of illicit and dangerous substances and articles. In this issue of Customs News, the Airport Command will share with us the experience of their involvement in this prestigious event.

Indeed, the Hong Kong Customs' involvement goes beyond the Equestrian Events held in Hong Kong. Experience has shown that terrorists respect no national or geographic boundaries and it highlights the importance of close international co-operation in the fight against terrorist threats. Our close geographic and trade link with the Mainland means that we have a special role to play in supporting the Mainland Customs to prevent any threats to the safety and security of the Beijing Olympics and its participants and spectators.

Months before the 2008 Beijing Olympics, we had already started working with the Mainland Customs to establish a framework for exchange of intelligence and explore measures to enhance our capability in detecting and deterring attempts to use the port of Hong Kong to smuggle in substances that may be used to sabotage the Beijing Olympics. The success of our joint effort with the Mainland Customs has not only helped to ensure the safety and security of the Olympic Events but has also set a good example of inter-customs co-operation in safeguarding the safe hosting of major international events and activities.

Our contribution to the safe staging of the Beijing Olympics and the Olympic Equestrian Events has also highlighted a changing and, indeed, an increasingly important role of Customs administrations around the world. The traditional role and core duties of customs officers has been collecting taxes and excise duties, protecting public revenue, guarding the boundary against the smuggling of contraband and dangerous drugs, and providing customs clearance facilitation to bona fide movement of trade and travellers.

Since the 911 terrorist attacks, we have seen increasing recognition of the role that Customs can play in the fight against terrorism. By nature of its work, Customs administrations have long had a closely knit international network for exchange of intelligence and good experience in taking joint action against transnational crimes. The fact that Customs is responsible for guarding the border control points means that it can take proactive and effective action to prevent the infiltration of substances and articles that may be used by terrorists to stage an attack.

The new role assumed by Customs in the fight against terrorism does not mean that it supersedes any of its existing roles. Rather, it means that customs officers around the world have to take on an additional duty and that is the fight against terrorism. It is an important duty and one that is essential to protecting the safety and security of our society. To take on this new duty and fulfil our new responsibility, we must work closely with other local and overseas enforcement agencies. We must also constantly acquire new skills not only in the use of hardware such as new technology and equipment but also in the better understanding of international politics and social development. All this will help to widen the perspective of customs officers and make the work of Customs more challenging and important.



Richard Yuen
Commissioner

Customs Security and Facilitation Measures for the Successful Staging of the Equestrian Events



The Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Henry Tang (second right), is briefed by Head of Airport Command, Mr Tam Wai-lun (left), on the Customs arrangements for the security and facilitation measures put in place at the Airport for the staging of the Equestrian Events.

The staging of the Olympic and Paralympic Equestrian Events in Hong Kong in August and September 2008 respectively marked a prestigious and memorable time to the people of Hong Kong. The Hong Kong Customs was honoured to be one of the departments providing support to the Events which were held with great success.

To ensure the law and order in Hong Kong to be stable and the Equestrian Events to be run smoothly, the Customs and Excise Department shared the important role in ensuring Hong Kong to be a safe city during the Events period. To achieve this, we had enhanced intelligence exchange with the Police on security information and with our Mainland counterparts in relation to articles that might disrupt the smooth running of the Events. The Airport Command (APC) and all control points of the Land

Boundary Command (LBC) and the Rail and Ferry Command (RFC) had enhanced inspections on passengers and cargoes at the Airport and all boundary points by increasing the use of Customs detector dogs and advanced technological equipment to assist in detecting dangerous and illicit materials during passenger and cargo clearance processes.

The APC, LBC and RFC, as forefront Formations receiving the Events participants, horses, equipment and spectators, actively played a gate-keeper role in safeguarding the security and stability of Hong Kong at the Airport and all boundary points. Their contributions were of vital importance to the successful staging of the Olympic Events. Various strategically-planned operations were conducted at the Airport and boundary points to maintain the safe and stable situation of Hong Kong not only internally but also

externally as Hong Kong leads a southern gateway to the Mainland.

A smooth reception and speedy Customs clearance was also provided at the Airport for the participants and horses when they arrived in Hong Kong. Designated channels were set up at the Airport for Events participants and official guests whilst pre-arrival Customs clearance was provided for competition horses, goods and equipment through the Air Cargo Clearance System. A Task Force was established through internal staff redeployment to strengthen support in operation, with a Special Clearance Team to attend horse shipments to facilitate their movement within the Airport areas. To safeguard the normal operation of essential Customs services under emergency situations, officers of APC and other concerned Formations had also conducted drills on quick response actions before the Events.

In July 2008, the Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Henry Tang, and the Permanent Secretary for Home Affairs, Mrs Carrie Yau, visited

the Airport to see the control and facilitative arrangements put in place for the Events. While recognising Customs efforts made for the Equestrian Events during the visit, they reiterated the Government's commitment and determination to make the Events a success, which could further promote local sports development and enhance Hong Kong's status as a centre of major events.

After the Equestrian Events, the Department received an encouraging note from the Equestrian Company noting that the guests and the National Olympic Committee members were highly appreciative of Hong Kong's arrangements for the Equestrian Events, in particular the arrival Customs services provided at the Airport. The Department's efforts for the successful staging of the Events have also won acclaim from the organising committees and participating teams. The feedback is not only a valuable recognition but also a powerful drive for our commitment to providing better quality service for Hong Kong.

Airport Command

Commissioner Attends 111th/112th WCO Council Sessions

Commissioner of Customs and Excise, Mr Richard Yuen, attended the 111th/112th Sessions of the Customs Co-operation Council (Council Sessions) at the World Customs Organization (WCO) Headquarters in Brussels, Belgium from June 26 to 28, 2008.

The Council Sessions discussed various topics, including the Framework of Standards to Secure and Facilitate Global Trade (SAFE FoS), Customs in the 21st Century, and US 100% Container Scanning Requirement.



Commissioner of Customs and Excise, Mr Richard Yuen (left), and Assistant Commissioner (Excise and Strategic Support), Mr Yu Koon-hing (right), at the 111th/112th Sessions of the World Customs Organization (WCO) Customs Co-operation Council.

The Council had also elected its new Chairperson, Secretary-General and regional representatives of various committees. Mr Martyn Dunne from New Zealand was elected as the Council Chairperson for 2008/2009 while Mr Kunio Mikuriya from Japan was elected as the Secretary-General for a 5-year term

starting from January 1, 2009.

Accompanying Mr Yuen to the Council Sessions were Assistant Commissioner (Excise and Strategic Support), Mr Yu Koon-hing, and Superintendent (Customs Liaison), Mr Ng Yan-kwong.

Customs Liaison Bureau

HK Customs Strengthens Co-operation with Counterparts

Commissioner of Customs and Excise, Mr Richard Yuen, signed a revised Customs Co-operative Arrangement with the Director-General of the French Customs and Excise Administration, Mr Jérôme Fournel, in Paris, France on October 14, 2008.

With the signing of this revised co-operative arrangement, Hong Kong and French Customs will continue to work closely on areas including the enforcement against smuggling and drug trafficking,



Commissioner of Hong Kong Customs and Excise, Mr Richard Yuen (left), and the Director-General of the French Customs and Excise Administration, Mr Jérôme Fournel, sign a revised Customs Co-operative Arrangement in Paris.



Commissioner of Hong Kong Customs and Excise, Mr Richard Yuen (left), and the Administrator General of Customs of Mexico, Mr Juan Jose Bravo Moise (right), sign a Customs Co-operative Arrangement to strengthen co-operation in fighting transnational crimes.

and the protection of intellectual property rights through arrangements of mutual administrative assistance. The previous co-operative arrangement with French Customs was signed in 1996.

Mr Yuen also signed a Customs Co-operative Arrangement with the Administrator General of Customs of Mexico, Mr Juan Jose Bravo Moise, on June 25 and a Memorandum of Understanding on

Mutual Administrative Assistance with Director-General for Tax and Customs Policy and Legislation of the Netherlands, Mr Theo W. Langejan, on June 27 to strengthen co-operation in the fight against transnational crimes and in the facilitation of trade through arrangements of mutual administrative assistance.

So far, Hong Kong Customs has signed the Customs Co-operative Arrangements with 14 Customs administrations, including the General Administration of Customs of the People's Republic of China and 13 overseas Customs administrations.

Customs Liaison Bureau



Commissioner of Hong Kong Customs and Excise, Mr Richard Yuen (left), and Director-General for Tax and Customs Policy and Legislation of the Netherlands, Mr Theo W. Langejan (right), sign a Memorandum of Understanding on Mutual Administrative Assistance to strengthen co-operation in customs matters.

APEC Meetings in Peru

Assistant Commissioner (Excise and Strategic Support), Mr Yu Koon-hing, Superintendent (Customs Liaison), Mr Ng Yan-kwong, and Senior Inspector of Customs Liaison Bureau, Ms Yu Sau-mee, attended the APEC Customs-Business Dialogue (ACBD) and the 2008 2nd APEC Sub-Committee on Customs Procedures (SCCP) Meeting in Peru in August 2008 to discuss the latest developments of issues relating to the simplification and harmonisation of customs procedures.

The ACBD was held in Callao on August 12, with the theme of "Towards an Effective Trade Facilitation and Protection of Intellectual Property Rights". About 230 participants from both Customs administrations and private sectors attended this meeting. The 2nd SCCP Meeting, held in Cuzco from August 14 to 17, was attended by 46 delegates from 20 APEC member economies.



Assistant Commissioner (Excise and Strategic Support), Mr Yu Koon-hing (centre), Superintendent (Customs Liaison), Mr Ng Yan-kwong (right), and Senior Inspector (Customs Liaison Bureau), Ms Yu Sau-mee (left), at the 2008 2nd APEC Sub-Committee on Customs Procedures Meeting.

Hong Kong Customs will continue to be a member of the "Friends of the Chair" Group 2009, which aims to support the incoming SCCP Chair (Singapore) to identify the achievable single-year goals for endorsement at the 2009 1st SCCP Meeting.

Customs Liaison Bureau

HK Customs Hosts WCO Regional Seminar



Commissioner of Customs and Excise, Mr Richard Yuen (sixth left, front row), with Senior Officers of the Department and facilitators and participants of the WCO Regional Seminar.

Hong Kong Customs, being one of the five World Customs Organization (WCO) regional training centres in the Asia Pacific Region, organised a training seminar on risk management for the neighbouring Customs administrations of the region in summer.

A total of 27 participants coming from 21 member administrations of Asia Pacific Region gathered at the Customs and Excise Training School between July 29 and August 1, 2008 to attend the "Corporate Risk Management" seminar, which was co-ordinated by five facilitators from the WCO, Australian Customs and Japanese Customs.

To broaden the horizon of the officers of the Department, 37 Officers from various Formations also attended as observers in different sessions of the seminar.

The 4-day seminar, firstly held in the training school with accommodation provided, gave a good opportunity for participants to share their experiences

and insights on various issues such as WCO new policies, project management, and different kinds of management studies. The participants found the seminar practical and well-organised with a wide range of issues discussed which could help them better understand the concept of corporate risk management and draw up their own organisational development policies.

Office of Training and Development



WCO Technical Officer, Mr Robert Struthers, explains the concept of change management at the seminar.

*P*articipation in International Seminars and Conferences

Hong Kong Customs has been maintaining strong networks with World Customs Organization (WCO) and other Customs administrations as well as enforcement agencies to combat transnational crimes by actively participating in international meetings and conferences.

Asia/Pacific Oceania Regional Enforcement Meeting

Head of Intelligence Bureau, Mr David Fong, attended the inaugural Asia/Pacific and Oceania Customs Regional Enforcement Meeting jointly hosted by the Australian and New Zealand Customs in Brisbane, Australia on May 6 and 7, 2008. During the 2-day meeting, Mr Fong exchanged views with other Customs administrations on improving co-operation, and shared with them information on intelligence and enforcement matters.

The meeting, being one of the action plans of the WCO Asia Pacific 2008-2010 Regional Strategic Plan (Compliance and Enforcement), provided a platform for Customs administrations of the Asia/Pacific and Oceania Region to explore and establish ways of developing joint operational activities and information exchange. All participants recognised

the importance of timely exchange of information and intelligence among administrations in addressing transnational crime threats, Mr Fong said.

Photo 1: Mr David Fong (left, front row) with other delegates at the Asia/Pacific and Oceania Customs Regional Enforcement Meeting.

The 3rd Unique Consignment Reference Correspondence Group Meeting, WCO Data Model Project Team Meeting & the 55th 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, attended the 3rd Unique Consignment Reference Correspondence Group Meeting, WCO Data Model Project Team Meeting and the 55th Information Management Sub-committee Meeting at WCO Headquarters in Brussels from May 28 to June 6, 2008.

The WCO Data Model Project Team Meeting finalised the data sets so that a new version 3.0 of WCO Data Model could be released in late 2009. At the 3rd Unique Consignment Reference Correspondence Group Meeting, there were discussions about the possible structures and potential



News in Snapshot

benefits of adopting a unique consignment reference number which would facilitate international trade.

Photo 2: Mr Keith Wong (left) and Mr Wong Cheuk-yin at the 55th Information Management Subcommittee Meeting.

Meeting on Customs Work on Internet Piracy

At the invitation of the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry (IFPI), Divisional Commander (Copyright Investigation), Mr Michael Kwan, spoke on technical aspects of Hong Kong Customs anti-Internet piracy investigation in IFPI's Asian Meeting held in Macau from July 31 to August 1,

2008. Mr Kwan shared with the participants Hong Kong Customs experiences in handling online piracy investigation, digital evidence and computer forensics.

The meeting brought together the IFPI members and the law enforcement agencies in Asia to share knowledge and to exchange experiences and insights on combating piracy, in particular, copyright offences committed on the Internet.

Photo 3: Mr Michael Kwan gives a presentation on Hong Kong Customs' efforts on anti-Internet piracy enforcement at the meeting.



2



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Visit to Counterparts

Visit to US Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau

To enhance the Office of Dutiable Commodities Administration's research capabilities and effectiveness in the excise administration of dutiable commodities, Senior Staff Officer (Dutiable

Commodities Administration), Mr Albert Ho, and Senior Inspector, Ms Lam Pui-yu, made the Department's first visit to the US Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau (TTB) in Washington DC, the United States from August 26 to 29, 2008.

During the 4-day visit, Mr Ho and Ms Lam

News in Snapshot

gained a better understanding of the revenue protection and fraud investigation of tobacco and alcoholic beverages in the US. They also visited the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement Office of the Department of Homeland Security to get the updated information on their fight against revenue frauds.

The US visit has laid a good foundation for future exchange of information and co-operation on excise matters between Hong Kong and the US.

Photo 1: Mr Albert Ho (second left) and Ms Lam Pui-yu (left) with TTB officers.



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Training

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

Prosecution-related Talk and Experience Sharing Session

To support the Territory-wide Campaign Against Youth Drug Abuse, the Office of Prosecution and Management Support invited Senior Public Prosecutor of Department of Justice, Mr Chiu Wai-tin, to give a talk on the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance on July 9, 2008. More than 100 frontline officers from various Formations participated.

Through the discussion forum, the officers enriched their legal knowledge and investigation skills in the fight against the youth drug abuse problem.

To equip the Inspectorate Officers with the most updated information and skills on case preparation and the court's requirements, the Service Prosecution Group organised an “Experience Sharing Session on Prosecution-related Matters” on July 22, 2008, with about 100 officers from different Formations attending.

Photo 2: Staff Officer (Prosecution) Ms Susan Lam (second left) welcomes Mr Chiu Wai-tin (first left) at the talk on the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance.

APC Receives Appreciation

The Airport Command (APC) was presented an appreciation plaque by Sony Hong Kong in recognition of the sustainable efforts made by the Department on trademark protection against counterfeit product shipments by air cargo.

Besides, Air Passenger and Apron Group (APAG) Officer, Mr Kwan Yan-tong, was one of the winners of the “Hong Kong International Airport's (HKIA) Best Service Award 2007-08” organised by the Airport Authority.

Photo 1: Acting Head of Airport Command, Mr Wong Man-chiu (right), receives an appreciation plaque from representatives of Sony Hong Kong.

Photo 2: Mr Kwan Yan-tong (left), accompanied by Superintendent, Mr Ki Wai-leung (centre), receives the HKIA's Best Service Award 2007-08.

Public Prosecutors' Visit to the Scenes of Crime

Led by Deputy Director of Public Prosecutions, Mr Luk Yee-shun, a 4-member delegation from Department of Justice visited the smuggling crime

scenes at the Frontier Closed Area on July 17, 2008 to get the first-hand information on the latest smuggling activities.

The delegation was first briefed by Assistant Commissioner (Intelligence and Investigation), Mr Tam Yiu-keung, on the latest smuggling trends before having a field trip to the crime scenes at Sha Tau Kok, Ta Ku Ling and Chung Ying Street. The visit provided the Public Prosecutors with a deeper understanding of the sophisticated smuggling activities and the geographical limitations at the boundary. By exchanging information with the prosecutors, officers of Intelligence Bureau had acquired more knowledge in the collection and preservation of evidence for cross-boundary smuggling cases.

The visit was arranged by Intelligence Bureau and Service Prosecution Group for the Public Prosecutors.

Photo 3: Mr Tam Yiu-keung (fourth right) briefs the Department of Justice delegation on the latest smuggling trends. Sitting next to him is Deputy Director of Public Prosecutions, Mr Luk Yee-shun (third left).

