

LCQ18: Measures to prevent sale of unsafe goods on the market

\*\*\*\*\*

Following is a written reply by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Frederick Ma, to a question by the Hon Daniel Lam in the Legislative Council today (January 30):

Question:

With the Chinese New Year drawing near, many people of Hong Kong will go shopping in Shenzhen in preparation for the festival. Nevertheless, it has been reported that in order to make quick money, some unscrupulous merchants on the Mainland produced some substandard and even poisonous products (such as counterfeit mobile phones, water-injected mutton and poisonous dried seafood) for sale on the market. Such products will be detrimental to the health of the people of Hong Kong if they are brought into Hong Kong. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) whether it will, during the run-up to the Chinese New Year, discuss further strengthening the relevant notification mechanisms between the Mainland and Hong Kong with the relevant mainland authorities, and request the relevant authorities in Shenzhen to take special measures to step up inspection of the merchandise for sale in the shopping hot spots in Shenzhen frequented by the people of Hong Kong and, at the same time, timely reflect to the Shenzhen authorities complaints from the people of Hong Kong about the above merchandise; and

(b) as prices of products are now surging, whether the Government will deploy additional manpower to patrol the city of Hong Kong, so as to eradicate the inflow into the local market of the above products, which lure customers with low prices?

Reply:

Madam President,

(a) The Government is always concerned about the safety of consumer goods and food sold on the market. In relation to food, as the Mainland is the major source of supplies for Hong Kong, we have established a channel of communication with the relevant Mainland authorities (including the General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine, the Guangdong Entry-Exit Inspection and Quarantine Bureau and the Shenzhen Entry-Exit Inspection and Quarantine Bureau), so that when any food safety problems arise, both sides can exchange

information promptly. This ensures that appropriate measures can be taken as quickly as possible to tackle the incidents.

As for general consumer goods, the Customs and Excise Department (C&ED) constantly collects safety reports and information from local and overseas sources, maintains liaison and exchanges information with overseas enforcement agencies and consumer protection organisations to facilitate enforcement actions. We would explore the feasibility of establishing a notification system with the relevant Mainland authorities.

(b) In relation to festive food for the Lunar New Year, the Centre for Food Safety has recently collected over 660 samples on the market for chemical and microbiological tests. The overall passing rate is 98%. For those that fail the tests, we have taken follow-up actions, including issuing warning letters to the shops involved, tracing the source of supply, and notifying the Mainland authorities of the details of the samples.

As regards other general consumer goods, C&ED would also conduct spot checks on retail outlets under the Consumer Goods Safety Ordinance (Cap. 456) from time to time and purchase samples for safety tests, so that appropriate measures can be taken in a timely manner to prevent the sale of unsafe goods on the market.

Ends/Wednesday, January 30, 2008