



二〇一二年六月十五日

旅行噏測試顯示：部分樣本化學物質含量偏高

消費者委員會一項測試顯示，四款旅行噏樣本手挽檢出的多環芳香烴（PAHs）含量，超過德國的自願性標籤計劃下，就含膠料消費品所訂的 PAHs 限量；部份 PAHs 可能致癌。

其中 1 個樣本檢測到的 PAHs 含量，更是超過限量約 1,800 倍。另外，亦有樣本檢出含多種塑化劑。

海關已建議被檢出手挽 PAHs 總含量高的旅行噏代理商，將有關產品下架及更換手挽。

消委會測試 19 款 22 吋以上有伸縮拉桿及手挽的直立式軟硬寄倉旅行噏，檢測項目包括重量、容積、耐用程度及方便程度，又測試噏面手挽和伸縮拉桿手柄位置是否含化學物質。

測試由國際消費者研究及試驗組織（International Consumer Research & Testing）統籌。樣本包括 9 款硬噏、7 款軟噏，及 3 款可擴充容量硬噏，樣本售價由港幣 350 元至 5,100 元不等。

耐用程度測試結果顯示，部份樣本經不起跌撞能力測試，1 個樣本的车輪系統損壞，而另一樣本的角度及線位爆裂。

防水程度方面，樣本在滿載行李後分別以直立及平放方式灑水，模擬下雨情況，兩個樣本的表现較佳。

有害物料檢測顯示，所有樣本的伸縮拉桿手柄並無發現 PAHs，只有兩個樣本檢出塑化劑 DEHP 或 DIBP，含量低於 0.1%。

手挽方面，19 款樣本中有 10 款檢出 PAHs：當中 1 個樣本的手挽 PAHs 總含量達 17,960 毫克/千克；另三款由 14.5 毫克/千克至 61.7 毫克/千克。其餘 9 個樣本則沒有檢出 PAHs。

部分 PAHs 可能致癌，通常存在於塑膠、橡膠及潤滑油中，在塑膠製造過程中 PAHs 可能殘留在產品內。

根據德國的自願性標籤計劃（GS Mark）對消費品的物料 PAHs 的限量要求，消費品若接觸皮膚多於 30 秒，所含的 PAHs 總限量為 10 毫克/千克，若少於 30 秒，所含的 PAHs 總限量為 200 毫克/千克。以接觸多於 30 秒計，是次測試有 4 款超出 PAHs 總限量 10 毫克/千克的要求。

塑化劑檢測發現，11 個樣本的手挽沒有檢出測試中的 7 種塑化劑，8 個樣本檢出最少 2 種塑化劑，包括一款手挽有高 PAHs 總含量的樣本；該 8 款樣本中的 5 款檢出含 4 種或以上的塑化劑，部分的塑化劑含量高於 0.1%。

各款測試樣本的耐用及方便程度，可參考最新一期《選擇》月刊（428 期）。

消費者在選購旅行噏時，可注意以下事項：

- 硬噏外殼保護能力較佳，但一般不可擴充容量。軟噏通常附有外袋，方便增加容量，消費者可因應需要選購。
- 旅行噏內籠設備有簡單亦有完備，例如設有內袋、固定衣服用的彈性扣帶等，消費者可因應喜好選購。
- 附設 TSA 密碼鎖（TSA lock）的旅行噏，可由美國運輸安全管理局利用保安鎖鑰匙開噏檢查，毋須損壞旅行噏。

酒精飲品測試顯示：氨基甲酸乙酯含量差異大

消費者委員會對酒精飲品的測試發現，當中的氨基甲酸乙酯（ethyl carbamate）含量差異大，一款紹興酒樣本的氨基甲酸乙酯含量達每千克含 0.26 毫克 -- 為測試樣本中最高。

氨基甲酸乙酯是一種可能致癌的物質，是食物在發酵或貯存過程中天然產生的物質，普遍存在於發酵食品和飲品中。人類從膳食中攝入的氨基甲酸乙酯，酒精飲品是其中一個已知的主要來源。

聯合國糧食及農業組織/世界衛生組織聯合食品添加劑專家委員會（簡稱 JECFA）指出，動物實驗顯示，此物質不但會損害基因，也會引致多個器官組織患癌。

消委會參考內地行業標準（SN 0285-1993），共測試 36 款東方風味的酒類飲品樣本，當中包括 16 款紹興酒（包括花彫、女兒紅、加飯酒、黃酒等）、8 款糯米酒及 12 款梅酒產品，樣本售價由港幣 24.9 元至 270 元不等。

測試結果顯示，各樣本的氨基甲酸乙酯含量差異大，紹興酒樣本的氨基甲酸乙酯含量由每千克 0.08 毫克至 0.26 毫克；糯米酒樣本由檢不出至每千克 0.07 毫克；而梅酒樣本則由每千克 0.01 毫克至 0.15 毫克。

本港並無法例規管發酵食物和酒精飲品的氨基甲酸乙酯最高限量，也無相關的國際標準。不過，個別國家（如：加拿大）則訂定了某些種類酒精飲品的氨基甲酸乙酯最高限量。

本港的食物安全中心表示，氨基甲酸乙酯在酒精飲品間的含量差異可以很大，該中心已對業界發出有關貯存及運送期間減少酒精飲品內氨基甲酸乙酯含量的指引；例如，指引建議業界使用合適的容器和不透光的箱，避免產品暴露在強光下；使用適當的隔熱貨櫃、配合付運時間和適當的貯存設施，避免產品暴露在高溫下（盡量維持溫度於攝氏 20 度或以下，切勿超過攝氏 38 度）；以及以先入先出的原則處理存貨。

消委會提醒消費者，氨基甲酸乙酯對於酒精飲品飲用量高的人，有潛在健康風險。此外，酒精飲品中含有的乙醇（ethanol），已被國際癌症研究機構確認為「令人類患癌的物质」（carcinogenic to humans）。

多種惡性腫瘤，如口腔癌、咽癌、喉癌、食道癌、肝癌、大腸癌及女性乳癌等，都與飲用酒精飲品有關。

由於酒精飲品內的乙醇可致癌，故此並沒有所謂「安全」水平，世界衛生組織至今也沒有就飲酒發出指引。

一般而言，衛生署建議經常飲酒的人，應控制自己的飲用量，以

盡量減低酒精對身體的傷害，兒童、青少年及孕婦更應滴酒不沾；如果準備駕車、操作機器、處理危險品、進行劇烈運動或在服藥期間，也不應飲酒。

留意倫敦金買賣隱藏風險

消費者決定作倫敦金買賣前，應先了解其風險。而在簽署第三者授權書前，亦應考慮清楚有否授權需要。

倫敦金買賣屬高風險的短線投資，主要參與者為機構投資者，例如中央銀行及金商。

本地提供倫敦金相關投資服務的公司，不受香港金融管理局或證券及期貨事務監察委員會的監管。金銀業貿易場是業界的自我規管組織，只能介入涉及其註冊會員的糾紛。

消費者委員會於 2010 至 2011 年期間，接獲 5 宗有關倫敦金買賣的投訴，牽涉金額約港幣 \$ 35 萬。

六月份《選擇》月刊報道的投訴個案，投訴人可能是在不知情的情況下簽署第三者授權書，授權經紀代為進行倫敦金買賣。

投訴人收到投資公司的電話向其推銷貴金屬投資產品，他最後同意以港幣 59,800 元投資倫敦金。一個月後，投訴人打算取回本金及預期回報，才發現戶口只餘港幣 1,763 元。交易紀錄顯示其戶口曾進行超過 200 次買賣，令手續費達至港幣 42,627 元，佔總投資金額的 7 成。

投訴人不滿經紀並未有向其解釋倫敦金的投資風險，只稱會帶來可觀潛在利益。

消費者在決定進行倫敦金買賣前，宜留意以下各點：

- 切勿盲目相信由投資公司從推銷電話中提供的資訊，宜按照個人投資目標及可承受風險去作投資決定；
- 切勿在未有充分瞭解及考慮下簽署第三者授權書，而在簽署任何開戶或其他法律文件前，宜先徵詢法律人士的專業意見；

- 到金銀貿易場網頁查核投資公司是否其註冊會員；
- 切勿向第三者透露個人網上交易系統的用戶名稱及密碼；
- 在簽署有關文件前，應先了解清楚倫敦金買賣的資料，如價格波動、風險、及佣金；
- 保留所有交易紀錄。

慎防求職跌入債務陷阱

消費者委員會接獲不少求職者投訴，指有公司藉招聘為名，推銷為實，誤導應徵者只要肯付出金錢，就有機會獲得一份報酬優厚的工作。當消費者大灑金錢後，方知跌入求職陷阱。

有關求職陷阱的投訴個案有上升趨勢：數字由 2010 年的 35 宗增加至 2011 年的 77 宗，升幅 120%。

這類投訴個案的受害人，多為學生或初出茅廬的畢業生，在應徵過程中，被無良商人誤導或施以高壓手段，導致付出大量金錢甚至借錢去購買訓練課程或產品，務求得到工作。

可是，不少應徵者在未得到工作之前，已經負債累累。

以下的一些投訴個案中，公司被指以誤導手法向應徵者推銷工作機會：

個案一

家怡有志於司儀、配音及幕後音樂等工作，向一間據稱其音樂總監為著名創作歌手的音樂公司申請職位。家怡到公司面試時，聽到職員談論，有關音樂總監為一個電視音樂比賽節目中的參賽者指導唱歌技巧，這令她對音樂公司更具信心。

家怡其後獲職員通知，指她十分適合他們的工作，但要求家怡先參加培訓班，費用為港幣 38,000 元。由於家怡覺得培訓班費用過於高昂，未有即時答應，一位招聘員突然大力拍向桌上，要求家怡即時繳

交港幣 1,600 元，並要求她交出信用卡及身分證。家怡在恐懼與壓力下就範，並依指示簽署多份文件及信用卡簽帳。當她簽署所有文件後，查看簽帳存根時，才驚覺存根上的銀碼是港幣 38,000 元而非港幣 1,600 元。她立刻表示反對，並要求取回所有已簽文件但被拒絕，職員更着她離開。

家怡知道受騙，向本會投訴，希望本會關注這類不良手法，防止更多年輕人受害。

個案二

小玲預科畢業後有興趣當普通話教師，她於報章看到一則普通話導師專業證書課程廣告後，聯絡有關公司。公司職員稱小玲完成該課程後會獲發導師證，以後可當導師賺取時薪港幣 350 元至 500 元。該公司更承諾提供推薦信及協助她找尋工作，小玲於是繳付港幣 13,500 元報讀該課程。

其後，小玲發覺貨不對辦，課程不但沒有提供教學方法，連朗讀訓練也欠奉，而公司亦從來沒有協助她找尋工作。小玲於是到本會投訴，公司最後答應退回學費給小玲。

個案三

剛完成中五課程的美美到一間美容中心應徵，當她到達美容中心面試時，公司職員不斷游說她當業務發展主任，但須於該公司消費滿港幣 28,800 元及繳交港幣 600 元行政費。美美未有即時答應，公司職員着美美第二天再到公司。

美美急切希望找到工作，於是第二天再到公司面試。在公司職員由早到晚無間斷的威迫利誘及疲勞轟炸下，美美最後答應成為業務發展主任，並即時被職員引領，向駐場財務公司借貸港幣 30,000 元，購買公司的產品及服務，並獲得工作。

美美事後感到十分困擾，認為產品並非她需要的，亦對公司的手法非常不滿，於是到本會投訴，要求該公司退回貨款及行政費共港幣 29,400 元。但美美的訴求遭到拒絕，最後本會建議她考慮以其他法律途徑追討損失。

求職者必須提高警覺，提防受騙：

- 任何職位如需先付出大量金錢，包括參與培訓課程、購買產品或服

務，必須三思。

- 在簽署任何聘用合約前，必須細閱合約條文。任何承諾或保證，如完成訓練課程後保證找到工作等，應以書面記錄，成為合約一部份。
- 若招聘的職位被吹噓能輕易賺錢，消費者必須當心，慎防有詐。一些毋需特定能力或學歷要求的職位，更有可能是求職陷阱。
- 求職者如遇到威嚇或高壓營商手法，應立刻離開，或報警求助。
- 若對工作或招聘公司有任何懷疑，應與家人或朋友商討，切勿草率答應。

特濃咖啡機測試

很多人喜歡以一杯特濃咖啡去開展新的一天。為了方便泡製不同種類的咖啡，有些人會在家中添置特濃咖啡機。

六月份《選擇》月刊刊登 **13** 款特濃咖啡機型號的測試結果，供消費者於選購前作參考。

測試由國際消費者研究及試驗組織（ICRT）統籌，**13** 款特濃咖啡機樣本，包括 **4** 款自動機、**6** 款一按全自動機及 **3** 款咖啡囊式機，售價由港幣 **1,290** 元至 **19,988** 元。

樣本的操作原理是以受壓的熱水加入咖啡豆粉末中，再將其色香味精華帶出。

一按全自動機只須按鍵選擇種類，便可製作出意式泡沫咖啡及其他含奶類的咖啡飲品。而自動機的用家，須自行將咖啡及奶泡混合。咖啡囊式機則須使用該生產商出產的咖啡囊，用過的咖啡粉會留在咖啡囊，清理較方便；但咖啡囊並非隨處買到，大多數需要於網上或經電話訂購。

測試項目包括製作速度、咖啡溫度、省電表現、製作兩杯咖啡的差別、打奶泡效果、說明書、使用方便程度及味道。

大部分樣本製作的咖啡都能達到約 67°C 的(特濃咖啡)理想溫度，若想享用較熱的咖啡，用家可考慮先暖杯或先用熱水把杯沖一次。

所有樣本的耗電量相對較低，製作 2 杯咖啡的電費支出大約為港幣 1 至 3 仙。為節省能源，用家應於使用後關機。雖然部份咖啡機並無待機模式，全部樣本都備有自動關機功能，約 9 分鐘至 15 小時後會關機。

今日(六月十五日)《選擇》月刊記者招待會主持為消委會宣傳及社區關係小組副主席梁光漢先生。

歡迎被邀出席新聞發布會的傳媒引用新聞稿的內容。

《選擇》月刊現已上網，網址為 <http://choice.yip.com.hk>，同時可透過電訊盈科固網及流動電話服務接收。

消費者委員會保留所有關於《選擇》月刊及網上《選擇》的權利(包括版權)。



消費者委員會
CONSUMER COUNCIL

Test on Suitcases Revealed: High Levels of Chemicals Found in Some Suitcases

A Consumer Council test revealed that Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons (PAHs), some of which may be carcinogenic, were found in the side handles of 4 samples of suitcases at levels exceeding the guidelines set under a German voluntary labelling scheme on consumer products containing plastics.

The PAHs level of one sample exceeded the limit by around 1,800 times. Various types of phthalate plasticizers were also detected in some samples.

Customs and Excise Department has advised the agent for the suitcases of which the handles are found with high PAHs to stop the sales of the concerned model and to replace the handles.

The Council conducted a test on 19 models of non-cabin suitcases of over 22" of the hard and soft types, with a retractable handle and side handle. They were tested for weight, capacity, durability, overall ease of use and the types of chemicals contained in the handles of the suitcases.

Coordinated by the International Consumer Research & Testing (ICRT), the test covered 9 hard suitcases, 7 soft suitcases, and 3 expandable hard suitcases that can be expanded to give extra capacity, with prices ranging from HK\$350 to HK\$5,100.

Test results on durability showed that 2 models could not stand on the drop test, in which the wheels system of 1 model was found damaged while another model was found with corner and seams damaged.

As far as the performance of water resistance was concerned, fully-loaded samples were put in transport and lying position under a sprinkle

system which simulated a rainfall situation, only 2 models showed better performance.

On the test for hazardous content, it was revealed that no PAHs were detected in all the retractable handles of the suitcases. Only two samples were found to contain the plasticizers DEHP or DIBP, at a level below 0.1%.

For the side handles of the suitcases, 10 out of 19 samples were found to contain PAHs. Of these, one sample was detected with PAHs at a level of 17,960mg/kg; while another 3 sample recorded the PAHs levels from 14.5mg/kg to 61.7mg/kg. No PAHs were found in the remaining 9 samples.

Some PAHs can be carcinogenic and may be commonly found in plastics, rubber and lubricating oil. It is possible that during the manufacturing process, traces of PAHs may be left in the plastic products.

According to the guidelines set under a voluntary German certification scheme, GS Mark, the PAHs limit for consumer products with skin contact for longer than 30 seconds is 10mg/kg while the relevant limit for consumer products with skin contact up to 30 seconds is 200mg/kg. The Council's test revealed that PAHs contained in 4 tested samples exceeded the 10mg/kg limit with skin contact for longer than 30 seconds

For the test on 7 plasticizers on the side handles, no traces of the plasticizers were found in 11 models. However, 8 samples were detected to contain at least 2 plasticizers, including the case of one sample which contained a high level of total PAHs. 5 of those 8 samples were detected to contain 4 or more plasticizers and in some cases the contents exceeded the level of 0.1%.

Test results of the durability and the overall ease of use of the tested samples can be found on the latest issue (428) of CHOICE magazine.

When selecting suitcases, consumers may find the following tips useful:

- A hard-shell casing provides greater protection for the content, but in general the suitcase cannot be expanded for extra capacity. Soft suitcases often include external compartments, which come in handy when additional capacity is needed. Consumers can choose according to their preferences.
- Some suitcases may have elaborate or simple internal accessories: some have built-in internal pockets and retaining straps for clothes while others do not. Consumers may choose basing on their needs.

- Suitcases with TSA locks can be opened by the officers of Transport Security Administration of the USA using universal "master" keys. Such locks may avoid damaging the suitcases during security checks.

Test on Alcoholic Beverages Reveals Substantial Variation in Ethyl Carbamate Levels

A Consumer Council test reveals that the levels of ethyl carbamate in alcoholic beverages varied substantially. The ethyl carbamate content in one Shaoxing wine sample was found to be the highest among the samples tested, which was 0.26 mg/kg.

Ethyl carbamate is a probable carcinogen commonly found in fermented foods and beverages, which is formed during the fermentation process or storage. Alcoholic beverage is one of the main dietary sources known in the intake of ethyl carbamate by humans.

The Joint Food and Agriculture Organization/World Health Organization Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA) has pointed out that ethyl carbamate can cause genetic damage and cancer in many organs in animal experiments.

Making reference to Mainland's industry standard (SN 0285-1993), the Consumer Council carried out a test on 36 Asian alcoholic beverages, including 16 Shaoxing wines (Hua Diao Wine, Nu Er Hong Wine, Chia Fan Chiew and Wang Wine), 8 glutinous rice wines and 12 plum wines, with prices ranging from HK\$24.9 to HK\$270.

Test results showed that the levels of ethyl carbamate in the samples varied substantially. The range of ethyl carbamate in Shaoxing wine samples was from 0.08 to 0.26 mg/kg, while that in glutinous rice wine samples and plum wine samples ranged from not detected to 0.07 mg/kg, and 0.01 to 0.15 mg/kg respectively.

There is no specific law in Hong Kong to limit the levels of ethyl carbamate in fermented foods and alcoholic beverages, nor is there any recognized international standard. However, some countries (such as Canada) have set limits on the levels of ethyl carbamate in certain kinds of alcoholic beverages.

Hong Kong's Centre for Food Safety pointed out that the levels of ethyl carbamate in different alcoholic beverages can be quite varied and the Centre has provided guidelines to the industry on reducing the levels of ethyl carbamate in alcoholic beverages during storage and transport. For example: the guidelines suggest to use proper containers and covering boxes to prevent products from light exposure; to use appropriate insulated containers, shipping

schedules and storage facilitates to minimize heat exposure (preferably at or below 20°C and critically not above 38°C); to keep stocks according to the first-in-first-out principle.

The Consumer Council alerts heavy drinkers of alcoholic beverages about the potential health risk of ethyl carbamate in alcohol. As well, alcoholic drinks contain ethanol, which is confirmed to be ‘carcinogenic to humans’ by the International Agency for Research on Cancer.

Malignant tumors such as oral cancer, nasopharyngeal cancer, laryngeal cancer, esophageal cancer, liver cancer, colorectal cancer and breast cancer in females are related to the consumption of alcoholic beverages.

As ethanol in alcoholic beverages is carcinogenic to humans, there is no “safe” level for consumption. To date, the World Health Organization has not issued any drinking guidelines.

Generally speaking, drinkers should exercise appropriate control on the amount of alcohol they drink, in order to lessen the harmful effects of alcohol on their health while children, teenagers and pregnant women should not drink at all. Nor should one drink when they are going to drive, operate machinery, handle dangerous goods, engage in intensive exercises and have taken medication as advised by the Department of Health.

Watch Out for Hidden Risks in Loco London Gold Trading

Consumers are reminded to understand fully the risks involved in Loco London gold margin trading before making the investment decision. They must think twice before signing a power of attorney authorizing their agents to trade on their behalf.

Loco London gold is mainly traded among institutional investors such as central banks or gold companies, with short investment time horizon and is highly speculative.

Local companies providing Loco London gold trading services are not regulated by the Hong Kong Monetary Authority nor the Securities and Futures Commission. The Chinese Gold and Silver Exchange Society (CGSE), a self-regulatory body in the trade, only has authority to intervene in disputes involving investment companies of its registered members.

The Consumer Council received 5 complaints on Loco London gold margin trading between 2010 and 2011, with involved amount about HK\$350,000.

The June issue of CHOICE highlighted a consumer complaint in which the complainant might have signed a power of attorney authorising his agents to trade (buy or sell) on his behalf without realizing that he had made such authorization.

It all started when the complainant received unsolicited cold calls from an investment company agent marketing investment products of precious metals. He eventually agreed to invest HK\$59,800 in London gold. When he intended to collect the principal and expected return a month later, he was shocked to find that only HK\$1,763 was left in his trading account. Trading records showed that his account had been traded over 200 times, resulted in a hefty HK\$42,627 commission fee, about 70% of the invested sum.

The complainant was upset that he was only told the potential upside gain of Loco London gold trading, not a word of the risks involved was mentioned.

Would-be investors in Loco London gold margin trading are advised to take heed of the following:

- Never blindly trust the information provided in unsolicited cold calls. Make investment decision according to one's investment goals and risk tolerant level.
- Never sign an authorization swiftly without due caution; get legal advice before signing.
- Check if the investment company is a registered member of CGSE on its website.
- Never disclose personal online trading username and password.
- Understand Loco London gold trading thoroughly such as price volatility, risks and commission before signing any investment documents.
- Retain trading documents for record.

Beware of Job Offers That Turn Into A Debt Trap

The Consumer Council has received job seekers' complaints on having fallen prey to scams as they are lured to pay hefty sum for the promise of lucrative job offers that never materialized.

The number of employment-related complaints has pointed to an upward trend: the figure jumped 120% from 35 complaints in 2010 to 77 in

2011.

Most of the victims are students or new school leavers who have been misled, or came under high pressure, to spend tens of thousands of dollars, or even take out a loan, for training and products in the hope that it would land them a job.

But before getting a job, some may find themselves slipping into a debt trap.

Below are some cases in which consumers had accused companies of employing misleading practices when presenting job opportunities:

Case 1

Long aspired to work in emceeing, voice acting and background music, Ka-yee applied for a job in a music agency, whose music director, as claimed by the company staff, was a famous sing-a-song writer. When she went to the company for an interview and audition, her confidence in the company was further boosted as she found the staff discussing about how the music director had honed the singing skills of a contestant at a TV show.

Later, Ka-yee was told that she was a suitable candidate for the position. But before taking up the job, she was persuaded to join a training course which cost HK\$38,000. Considering the course too expensive, Ka-yee did not give a prompt reply and all of a sudden, a recruiter hit the desk with a loud bang. He asked Ka-yee to pay HK\$1,600 immediately and hand over her credit card and identity card. Under fear and pressure, Ka-yee submitted and signed documents as well as credit card slips under the recruiter's order. Only after she had completed signing the contracts did she learn that the amount on the credit card receipt was HK\$38,000 instead of HK\$1,600. She raised her objection immediately and requested to get back all the signed documents, but was rejected by the company and told to leave.

Realizing that she had been scammed, Ka-yee took her case to the Consumer Council hoping that it would serve as a case to alert the public about the company's sales tactics.

Case 2

Siu-ling was interested in the career as a Mandarin teacher after completing the A-levels Certificate. When she spotted a newspaper advertisement on a Mandarin teaching certification programme, Siu-ling contacted the company and was told that she would be awarded a teaching certificate on completion of the programme. After which, she could earn an hourly rate between HK\$350 and HK\$500. The company even promised to offer her a recommendation letter and help her find a job. Under the

impression that she would be guaranteed a job, Siu-ling paid HK\$13,500 to join the programme.

She soon found that the promises were false as neither teaching methods nor recitation techniques were taught in the programme, and no assistance was ever provided to her in finding a job. Siu-ling later took her case to the Consumer Council and the company agreed to refund.

Case 3

Mei-mei, who had just completed secondary school education and applied for a job in a beauty parlour. When she arrived at the parlour for an interview, she was persuaded to spend HK\$28,800 and HK\$600 administrative fees in becoming a business development officer. While Mei-mei was still considering, she was asked to come again the next day.

In desperate need of a job, Mei-mei arrived the following day for an interview again, but this time she was subjected to endless high-pressure persuasion from morning till night until she gave in and agreed to become a business development officer. At the same time, she was led by a recruiter to take out a loan of HK\$30,000 from an on-site credit agency with which she paid for the products and the job.

But afterwards, Mei-mei felt very frustrated as the products and service were not something she needed, and she sought help from the Council for refund of the products and administrative fees totalled HK\$29,400. Her request was rejected by the company, and the Council advised Mei-mei to see redress through legal means.

Job seekers should watch out for the danger of scams:

- Think twice if a job opening requires the candidate to spend large sum of money for training, products or services.
- Read the terms and conditions carefully before signing an employment contract. Verbal promises, such as guaranteeing a job after training, should be put in writing and stated in the contract.
- Beware of fraud if the company boasted of easy ways to make money. The job can be a fake opportunity if it promised high wages with few duties, required no experience or qualification.
- In face of sales pitches or high-pressure tactics from recruiters, job seekers should ask to leave the premise immediately or call the police.
- Consult friends or relatives if there are any doubts about a company or

employment agency.

Test on Espresso Makers

For many people a cup of espresso is the way to start a day. Some might prefer having their own espresso maker at home for convenience and choices of different coffee styles.

A comparative test report of 13 models of espresso coffee makers was published in the June issue of CHOICE, a good reference for consumers contemplating the purchase.

The test was coordinated by International Consumer Research and Testing and conducted in Europe. The 13 models included 4 automatic, 6 fully automatic, and 3 using specially prepared coffee capsules. Their prices ranged from HK\$1,290 to HK\$19,988.

The samples made espresso coffee by injecting pressurized water to coffee powder to extract the aroma essence.

The fully automatic models only required a single touch to make both espresso and frothing milk, as well as cappuccino and other special milk coffees. The automatic models, however, required the users to mix coffee with frothed milk manually. The coffee capsule models only accommodate coffee capsules from the same manufacturers. As the used coffee powder would stay in the capsule, it made cleaning easier. But the coffee capsules were not widely available in shops and were mostly ordered online or by phone.

The comparative test included the following items: preparation time, coffee temperature, energy saving performance, difference of making 2 cups, milk frothing, instruction manual, convenience of use and taste test.

In general, coffees prepared by all models were at around the optimal temperature (for espresso coffee) of 67°C. For hotter coffee, users might consider using cup warmer or rinsing the cup with hot water before serving.

Energy consumption of all the samples was comparatively low. It cost one to three cents of electricity to make 2 cups of coffee. Users are reminded to turn off the machine after use to save energy. While some samples do not have standby mode, they all have auto switched off function after idling for 9 minutes to 15 hours.

CHOICE magazine is now also available online (at

<http://choice.yp.com.hk>) and via fixed-line and mobile services of PCCW.

Chairing the press conference today (June 15) on the publication of CHOICE issue number 428 is Mr. Philip LEUNG Kwong-hon, Vice Chairman of Publicity and Community Relations Committee of the Consumer Council.

Members from the media who are invited by this Council to the Press Conference may quote the content of this Press Statement.

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Issued by
Consumer Council
15 June 2012