Hong Kong earthquake aid tied up in red tape, news article

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Hong Kong - Relief supplies intended for the victims of May's devastating Sichuan earthquake were left sitting at Hong Kong's port in a bureaucratic wrangle with Chinese authorities, a media report said Wednesday. The aid, comprising 1,000 tins of baby milk powder, toothpaste, brushes, shampoo, clothing and toys, was originally due to be flown to Chengdu in Sichuan via Shenzhen airport in southern China, the South China Morning Post said.

But the consignment was stopped at the border and sent back to Hong Kong after Chinese customs officials said more customs documents were needed. The relief effort's organizers, the Association of Chinese Evangelical Ministry, said it was told to get approval from China's civil affairs ministry and the Hong Kong government if it wanted to transport the cargo to Sichuan.

"Those officers are really not acting wholeheartedly in the interests of the people. These precious supplies might become a waste if the items fail to reach the hands of the needy in time," association spokesman Constant Kim said.

He said the aid needed to be delivered quickly because the milk powder's use-by date expires in August. A spokesman for the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau said the bureau had been approached by the association and would follow up the issue with the Chinese authorities.

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