

## Hong Kong Customs seizes suspected illicit cigarettes worth over \$43 million in two days (with photos)

Hong Kong Customs yesterday (June 2) and today (June 3) detected two illicit cigarette cases and seized a total of about 15.9 million suspected illicit cigarettes with an estimated market value of about \$43.3 million and a duty potential of about \$30.3 million in Yuen Long and the Kwai Chung Customhouse Cargo Examination Compound respectively. Customs has so far this year seized about 85 million suspected illicit cigarettes, a figure that already exceeds the annual seizure amounts for each of the last six years.

Customs officers yesterday conducted an anti-illicit cigarette operation in Yuen Long and seized about 8 million suspected illicit cigarettes from a metal shed. A goods vehicle suspected to be involved in the case was detained. Customs is now tracing the source of the illicit cigarettes.

Moreover, through intelligence analysis, Customs officers today selected for inspection a seaborne transshipment container arriving from Vietnam heading for the Philippines via Hong Kong at the Kwai Chung Customhouse Cargo Examination Compound. The container was declared to be containing tissue. Upon inspection, Customs officers found about 7.9 million suspected illicit cigarettes in the container.

Investigations of the two cases are ongoing.

Customs will continue its risk assessment and intelligence analysis for interception at source as well as through its multi-pronged enforcement strategy targeting storage, distribution and peddling to combat illicit cigarette activities.

Customs made an annual seizure of 52.1 million suspected illicit cigarettes in 2014, followed by 71.9 million, 63 million, 60.7 million, 53.4 million and 55 million respectively in the next five years.

Smuggling is a serious offence. Under the Import and Export Ordinance, any person found guilty of importing or exporting unmanifested cargo is liable to a maximum fine of \$2 million and imprisonment for seven years.

Under the Dutiable Commodities Ordinance, anyone involved in dealing with, possession of, selling or buying illicit cigarettes commits an offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$1 million and imprisonment for two years.

Members of the public may report any suspected illicit cigarette activities to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account ([crimereport@customs.gov.hk](mailto:crimereport@customs.gov.hk)).



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## Public hospitals daily update on COVID-19 cases

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

As at noon today (June 3), one COVID-19 confirmed patient (case number: 1067) was discharged from hospital in the past 24 hours. So far, a total of 1 039 patients with confirmed or probable infections have been discharged.

At present, there are 651 negative pressure rooms in public hospitals with 1 211 negative pressure beds activated. A total of 51 confirmed patients are currently hospitalised in 10 hospitals, among which two patients are in critical condition (case numbers: 595 and 1084), and the remaining 49 patients are in stable condition.

The Hospital Authority will maintain close contact with the Centre for Health Protection to monitor the latest developments and to inform the public and healthcare workers on the latest information in a timely manner.

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## Government signs service level agreements with banks for Cash Payout Scheme

The Government today (June 3) signed service level agreements with representatives of 21 banks for the Cash Payout Scheme. The agreements were signed by the Director of Accounting Services, Mr Charlix Wong, on behalf of the Government. The Financial Secretary, Mr Paul Chan; the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Mr Christopher Hui; and the Chief

Executive of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA), Mr Eddie Yue, witnessed the signing ceremony.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, Mr Chan said, "I wish to thank all the participating banks for helping the Government implement the scheme, making it possible for eligible people to register and receive the \$10,000 payout quickly, conveniently and safely. I would also like to thank the HKMA for its assistance in the process."

The 21 banks that entered into agreement with the Government (see list below) will provide the electronic registration platform for the Cash Payout Scheme. To receive the payment with their sole-name bank account, eligible people may register through the relevant bank's website or Internet banking service, which is the fastest way to receive payment. They may also submit a paper registration form to the respective bank.

Mr Chan noted that preparation for the scheme has reached the final stage. It is expected that registration would start in the end of June, with payment starting to be made in July.

The Financial Secretary announced in the 2020-21 Budget that a sum of \$10,000 would be disbursed to each Hong Kong permanent resident aged 18 or above, with a view to encouraging local consumption and relieving people's financial burden. The Government will announce the registration and payment methods and other details as soon as possible.

The list of the 21 banks participating in the Cash Payout Scheme (in alphabetical order) is as follows:

1. Bank of China (Hong Kong)
2. Bank of Communications (Hong Kong)
3. Bank of East Asia
4. China CITIC Bank International
5. China Construction Bank (Asia)
6. Chiyu Banking Corporation
7. Chong Hing Bank
8. Citibank (Hong Kong)
9. CMB Wing Lung Bank
10. Dah Sing Bank
11. DBS Bank (Hong Kong)
12. Fubon Bank
13. Hang Seng Bank
14. The Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation
15. Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (Asia)
16. Nanyang Commercial Bank
17. OCBC Wing Hang Bank
18. Public Bank (Hong Kong)
19. Shanghai Commercial Bank
20. Standard Chartered Bank (Hong Kong)
21. ZA Bank

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## CHP announces no new local confirmed cases of COVID-19 today

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health has announced that as of 4pm today (June 3), no new local confirmed cases of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) had been recorded, and that the number of cases in Hong Kong remained at 1 094 so far (comprising 1 093 confirmed cases and one probable case).

The CHP has been proactively conducting epidemiological investigations and carrying out preventive control measures about the cluster in Lek Yuen Estate, Sha Tin. As of 4pm today, 1 056 deep throat saliva samples had been collected in Luk Chuen House, Lek Yuen Estate, among which 25 samples need to be collected again owing to leakage and the remaining 1 031 samples have had testing for COVID-19 completed. Except for the four confirmed cases announced yesterday (June 2) with positive results, other samples have tested negative.

The CHP has been taking the initiative to contact those residents in Luk Chuen House who have not yet returned their deep throat saliva samples for follow-up. A spokesman for the CHP said, "As of 5pm today, 66 units with relevant residents had not yet returned their samples. The CHP strongly appeals to and urges them to return their samples to the CHP as soon as possible for early testing. The CHP will arrange compulsory testing for those who do not return their samples."

Meanwhile, as of 4pm today, the CHP had collected and tested 1 726 samples for Luen Yuet House, Kwai Luen Estate, with no positive results.

The CHP again urged members of the public to maintain an appropriate social distance with other people as far as possible in their daily lives to minimise the risk of infection. In particular, they should go out less and avoid social activities such as meal gatherings or other gatherings to reduce the chance of contacting infected persons who may not present any symptoms, and minimise the risk of outbreak clusters emerging in the community.

The spokesman said, "Given that the situation of COVID-19 infection remains severe and that there is a continuous increase in the number of cases reported around the world, members of the public are strongly urged to avoid all non-essential travel outside Hong Kong.

"The CHP also strongly urges the public to maintain at all times strict personal and environmental hygiene, which is key to personal protection against infection and prevention of the spread of the disease in the community. On a personal level, members of the public should wear a surgical mask when having respiratory symptoms, taking public transport or staying in crowded places. They should also perform hand hygiene frequently, especially

before touching the mouth, nose or eyes.

"As for household environmental hygiene, members of the public are advised to maintain drainage pipes properly, regularly pour water into drain outlets (U-traps) and cover all floor drain outlets when they are not in use. After using the toilet, they should put the toilet lid down before flushing to avoid spreading germs."

Moreover, the Government has launched the website "COVID-19 Thematic Website" ([www.coronavirus.gov.hk](http://www.coronavirus.gov.hk)) for announcing the latest updates on various news on COVID-19 infection and health advice to help the public understand the latest updates. Members of the public may also gain access to information via the COVID-19 WhatsApp Helpline launched by the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer. Simply by saving 9617 1823 in their phone contacts or clicking the link [wa.me/85296171823?text=hi](https://wa.me/85296171823?text=hi), they will be able to obtain information on COVID-19 as well as the "StayHomeSafe" mobile app and wristband via WhatsApp.

To prevent pneumonia and respiratory tract infection, members of the public should always maintain good personal and environmental hygiene. They are advised to:

- Wear a surgical mask when taking public transport or staying in crowded places. It is important to wear a mask properly, including performing hand hygiene before wearing and after removing a mask;
  - Perform hand hygiene frequently, especially before touching the mouth, nose or eyes, after touching public installations such as handrails or doorknobs, or when hands are contaminated by respiratory secretions after coughing or sneezing;
  - Maintain drainage pipes properly and regularly (about once a week) pour about half a litre of water into each drain outlet (U-trap) to ensure environmental hygiene;
  - Cover all floor drain outlets when they are not in use;
  - After using the toilet, put the toilet lid down before flushing to avoid spreading germs;
  - Wash hands with liquid soap and water, and rub for at least 20 seconds. Then rinse with water and dry with a disposable paper towel. If hand washing facilities are not available, or when hands are not visibly soiled, performing hand hygiene with 70 to 80 per cent alcohol-based handrub is an effective alternative;
  - Cover your mouth and nose with tissue paper when sneezing or coughing. Dispose of soiled tissues into a lidded rubbish bin, then wash hands thoroughly; and
  - When having respiratory symptoms, wear a surgical mask, refrain from work or attending class at school, avoid going to crowded places and seek medical advice promptly.
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# Traveller jailed for smuggling saiga antelope horns (with photo)

A traveller who smuggled saiga antelope horns was convicted for violating the Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance, and was sentenced to imprisonment today (June 3).

A spokesman for the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) said that a 50-year-old male traveller arrived in Hong Kong on November 29, 2019, from Moscow. A total of 224 saiga antelope horns were found in his baggage by Customs officers.

Subsequent to follow-up investigation, the AFCD charged the man with the illegal import of a listed species in Appendix II to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). He was convicted at the District Court. With 30 months' imprisonment as the starting point for sentencing, the defendant was sentenced to 20 months behind bars today after a one-third reduction as he pleaded guilty.

Saiga antelopes are listed in Appendix II to the CITES and regulated under the Ordinance in Hong Kong. Any person importing, exporting or possessing specimens of endangered species not in accordance with the Ordinance commits an offence and will be liable to a maximum fine of \$10 million and imprisonment for 10 years. The specimens will also be forfeited upon conviction.

To enquire about the control of endangered species or to report suspected irregularities, the public can call the AFCD on 1823 or visit [www.cites.hk](http://www.cites.hk).

