

Hong Kong Customs detects six smuggling cases exploiting ocean-going vessels and river trade vessels (with photos)

Hong Kong Customs mounted a special operation codenamed "Wave Breaker" from August to September and detected four suspected smuggling cases involving ocean-going vessels and two suspected smuggling cases involving river trade vessels. A large batch of suspected smuggled goods with a total estimated market value of about \$100 million was seized.

Through intelligence analysis and risk assessment, Customs suspected that criminals were using ocean-going vessels and river trade vessels to smuggle goods and thus formulated strategies to combat related activities. During the operation period, three ocean-going vessels scheduled to depart from Hong Kong to Malaysia, one ocean-going vessel scheduled to depart from Hong Kong to Shanghai, as well as two river trade vessels bound for Nansha and Macao respectively, were selected for inspection. Upon examinations, Customs officers onboard the six vessels found large batches of suspected smuggled goods, including over 500 000 electronic products, about 2 000 bottles of table wines, about 240 pallets of electronic wastes, about seven tonnes of suspected scheduled shark fins, and about three tonnes of frozen meat.

In the operation, Customs officers arrested three men, aged between 40 and 54 years old, suspected to be connected with the cases.

Investigations of the six cases are ongoing. The three arrested persons have been released on bail pending further investigation and the likelihood of further arrests is not ruled out.

Being a government department primarily responsible for tackling smuggling activities, Customs has all along been combating various smuggling activities proactively at the forefront. Customs will keep up its enforcement action and continue to fiercely combat sea smuggling activities through proactive risk management and intelligence-based enforcement strategies, along with mounting targeted anti-smuggling operations at suitable times to land a solid blow against relevant activities.

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 Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance, any person found guilty of importing or exporting an endangered species without a licence is liable to a maximum fine of \$10 million and imprisonment for 10 years.

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Under the Waste Disposal Ordinance, it is an offence for anyone to import or export hazardous waste without obtaining a valid permit beforehand. First-time offenders are liable to a maximum fine of \$200,000 and six months' imprisonment. For subsequent offences, offenders are liable to a maximum fine of \$500,000 and two years' imprisonment.

Members of the public may report any suspected smuggling activities to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk) or online form (eform.cefs.gov.hk/form/ced002).



