

Hong Kong Customs detects two illicit cigarette cases and raids suspected illicit cigarette storage centre (with photos)

Hong Kong Customs detected two illicit cigarette cases and raided a suspected illicit cigarette storage centre while conducting anti-illicit cigarette operations in Sunny Bay and Fanling yesterday (June 8). Over 1.3 million suspected illicit cigarettes in total, with an estimated market value of about \$4.9 million and a duty potential of about \$3.3 million, were seized.

In the first case, Customs officers intercepted two light goods vehicles parked on the roadside of Sea Point Road in Sunny Bay yesterday afternoon. After a search, about 780 000 suspected illicit cigarettes were seized inside the two vehicles. Two men, aged 26 and 34, suspected to be connected with the case were arrested, while the two vehicles suspected to be used for storing and distributing illicit cigarettes were also detained.

In the second case, Customs officers intercepted a woman on Jockey Club Road in Fanling on the same afternoon and seized about 2 600 suspected illicit cigarettes inside a green shopping bag carried by her. The 44-year-old woman was subsequently arrested. Customs officers later escorted her to a nearby subdivided unit for a search and further seized about 530 000 suspected illicit cigarettes. A suspected illicit cigarette storage centre, which is believed to be mainly used to supply illicit cigarettes to residents in the North District, was smashed successfully.

Investigations of the two above-mentioned cases are ongoing. Customs will continue to trace the source and flow of the illicit cigarettes. The likelihood of further arrests is not ruled out.

Customs will also 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 spare no effort in combating illicit cigarette activities.

Customs stresses that it is an offence to buy or sell illicit cigarettes. 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).

