

Hong Kong Customs detects two illicit cigarette smuggling cases with seizures worth about \$54 million (with photos)

Hong Kong Customs detected two large-scale illicit cigarette smuggling cases at the Kwai Chung Customhouse Cargo Examination Compound in the past week, and seized about 15 million suspected illicit cigarettes in total. The estimated market value was about \$54 million with a duty potential of about \$36 million.

In the first case, through risk assessment and intelligence analysis, Customs on September 21 selected and inspected a 20-foot seaborne container, declared as carrying palm oil, arriving in Hong Kong from Cambodia. Upon inspection, Customs officers seized about 4 million suspected illicit cigarettes inside the container.

On September 25, another case was detected in which Customs officers inspected a 40-foot seaborne container, arriving in Hong Kong from South Korea and declared as containing automobile parts. About 11 million suspected illicit cigarettes were seized therein.

Investigations of the two cases are ongoing. Customs will continue to trace the source and flow of the illicit cigarettes.

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.

Customs reminds members of the public 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) or online form (eform.cefs.gov.hk/form/ced002).

