

Hong Kong Customs strives to combat cross-boundary smuggling activities before and during Lunar New Year (with photos)

The Customs and Excise Department (C&ED) mounted a special operation codenamed "Pathfinder" before and during the Lunar New Year at the airport, seaport, land boundary, railway and ferry control points in a bid to combat smuggling and other illegal activities through passenger and cargo channels.

In the 27-day operation that started on January 14 and concluded on February 9, the C&ED detected a total of 1 300 cases with the arrest of 1 203 persons, resulting in the seizure of items with an estimated value of about \$130 million.

On the anti-narcotics front, 61 dangerous drug cases were detected, resulting in the arrest of 28 persons and seizure of about 130 kilograms of suspected dangerous drugs with an estimated market value of about \$22 million. Most of the seized items were methamphetamine (commonly known as "ice"), cannabis, cocaine and gamma-butyrolactone, which were found mainly in air parcels and on air passengers.

The C&ED also detected cases that led to the seizure of infringing products with an approximate value of \$540,000. Other smuggled goods of various kinds including frozen meat, mobile phone accessories and bird nest, valued at about \$15 million were also seized.

Customs officers also detected 146 smuggling cases involving suspected endangered species including pangolin scales, ivory tusks and products, red sandalwood logs, orchids and controlled shark fins, with an estimated seizure value of about \$73 million. Customs officers also seized about 220 kg of game, meat and poultry and about 600 poultry eggs that were imported into Hong Kong without a health certificate. These cases were handed over to the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department and the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department for follow-up.

During the special operation, Customs officers seized about 5.3 million suspected illicit cigarettes and 98 litres of dutiable liquor with an estimated market value of about \$15.5 million at various control points. A total of 967 persons were arrested.

A spokesman for the C&ED said, "Hong Kong Customs has all along adopted a zero-tolerance approach against cross-boundary smuggling activities. Apart from strengthening deployment and making stringent enforcement actions during the festive period, Customs officers will be equally vigilant in combating smuggling activities through risk assessment and intelligence analysis in their routine operation."

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

