

Man convicted and jailed for engaging in illicit cigarette distribution activities (with photo)

A 37-year-old man was sentenced to nine months' imprisonment at the Tuen Mun Magistrates' Courts today (June 20) for engaging in illicit cigarette distribution activities, in contravention of the Dutiable Commodities Ordinance (DCO).

During an anti-illicit cigarette operation conducted in Po Tin Estate, Tuen Mun, on April 22, Customs officers arrested a man, aged 37 and claiming to be unemployed, for engaging in illicit cigarette distribution activities, and seized about 23 000 illicit cigarettes from his private vehicle. The vehicle was also detained.

During another anti-illicit cigarette operation conducted in Tin Ching Estate, Tin Shui Wai, yesterday afternoon (June 19), Customs officers spotted the same man, who was on bail, suspected of distributing illicit cigarettes. Upon interception, 19 000 illicit cigarettes were found inside another private vehicle of the man. Customs officers then arrested the man again and seized the private vehicle.

A total of about 42 000 illicit cigarettes were seized, with an estimated market value of about \$189,000 and a duty potential of about \$139,000, from the two cases.

Customs welcomes the sentence. The custodial sentence has imposed a considerable deterrent effect and reflects the seriousness of the offences. Customs reminds members of the public that under the DCO, 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 182 8080 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk) or online form (eform.cefs.gov.hk/form/ced002).

