

Hong Kong Customs detects three large-scale illicit cigarette smuggling cases and seizes suspected illicit cigarettes worth about \$160 million (with photo)

Hong Kong Customs detected three large-scale illicit cigarette smuggling cases from July 23 to 26 and seized a total of about 57 million suspected illicit cigarettes with an estimated market value of about \$160 million and a duty potential of about \$110 million in Fanling, Yuen Long, Tuen Mun and Tsing Yi.

During an anti-illicit cigarette operation conducted in Ping Che, Fanling, on July 23, Customs officers seized about 11 million suspected illicit cigarettes inside a 40-foot container at a metal hut.

After a follow-up investigation, Customs officers searched a container yard in Yuen Long, a car park in Tuen Mun and two car parks in Tsing Yi on July 25 and 26. Four 40-foot containers and a 20-foot container were discovered to have concealed suspected illicit cigarettes inside. The total seizure amount was about 46 million.

During the operation, Customs officers arrested two men suspected to be connected with the cases who are aged 35 and 36. Six containers suspected to be involved in the cases were also detained.

An investigation is ongoing. Customs will continue to trace the source and the flow of the illicit cigarettes. The likelihood of further arrests is not ruled out.

Including the suspected illicit cigarettes seized in this operation, Customs has seized about 334 million suspected illicit cigarettes this year as at July 31, an increase of about 37 per cent compared to the figure for the same period last year.

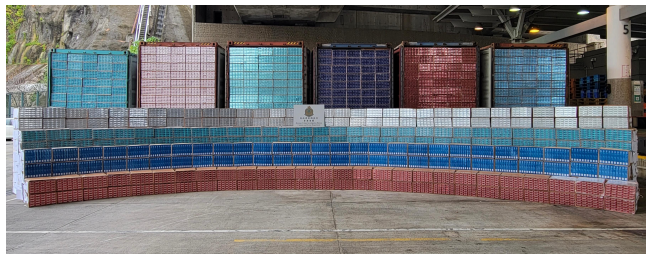
Customs will continue its risk assessment and intelligence analysis for interception at source as well as through its multi-pronged enforcement strategy targeting storage, distribution and peddling to spare no effort in combating illicit cigarette activities.

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).



Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Thursday, August 4, 2022 is 100.7 (same as yesterday's index).

Public urged to keep up anti-mosquito efforts

The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) today (August 4) announced that the monthly gravidtrap index for *Aedes albopictus* in June was 21.1 per cent at Level 3, indicating that the distribution of *Aedes albopictus* was extensive in the survey areas. Relevant government departments had stepped up mosquito prevention and control work immediately, and the area gravidtrap index (AGI) in most of the survey areas concerned recorded a significant decrease in the first phase of monitoring in July.

Among the 64 survey areas, the AGI in 30 areas exceeded the alert level of 20 per cent in June. The gravidtraps concerned were mostly located in the vicinity of public and private residential areas, schools, recreational and sports facilities and public places.

Moreover, the monthly density index for *Aedes albopictus* was 1.6 in June, which represented that an average of 1.6 *Aedes albopictus* adults were found in the *Aedes*-positive gravidtraps, indicating that the number of adult *Aedes albopictus* was slightly abundant in the survey areas. The gravidtrap and density indices for *Aedes albopictus* in different survey areas as well as

information on mosquito prevention and control measures are available on the department's website at www.fehd.gov.hk.

A spokesman for the FEHD said, "The Government is very concerned about the mosquito infestation in June. Upon learning of the situation, the Environment and Ecology Bureau contacted relevant Heads of Departments, appealing to them to take immediate and effective measures to strengthen the mosquito control work in venues under their respective management. The FEHD also intensified mosquito prevention and control work with relevant government departments, and provided them with advice and technical support to assist them in implementing effective anti-mosquito measures swiftly. At the same time, the FEHD, in collaboration with personnel from relevant government departments, conducted site inspections to eliminate potential mosquito breeding places, and strengthened publicity and education.

"Under the concerted efforts and collaboration of various government departments, most of the survey areas having the AGI exceeding the alert level of 20 per cent in June have recorded a significant decrease in the index in the first phase of monitoring in July. The FEHD will continue to monitor the mosquito infestation in all districts, and will take prompt and effective mosquito prevention and control work. The FEHD will also strengthen law enforcement; a total of 106 prosecutions against mosquito breeding have been initiated in the first six months of 2022. Meanwhile, the FEHD kick-started a three-week territory-wide thematic mosquito prevention and control special operation in June, focusing on enhanced mosquito control work at strategic areas, such as construction sites, etc," the spokesman continued.

The FEHD appeals to members of the public to work together to carry out mosquito prevention and control measures early, including inspecting their homes and surroundings to remove potential breeding grounds, changing the water in vases and scrubbing their inner surfaces, removing the water in saucers under potted plants at least once a week, properly disposing of containers such as soft drink cans and lunch boxes, and drilling large holes in unused tyres. The FEHD also advises members of the public and estate management bodies to keep drains free of blockage and level all defective ground surfaces to prevent the accumulation of water. They should also scrub all drains and surface sewers with an alkaline detergent at least once a week to remove any mosquito eggs.

Aedes albopictus is a kind of mosquito that can transmit dengue fever (DF) as well as Zika virus infection. DF is commonly found in tropical and subtropical regions of the world, and has become endemic in many countries in Southeast Asia. The dengue activity in neighbouring areas has remained high and Hong Kong has recorded one imported DF case so far this year. Furthermore, as Hong Kong's hot and rainy summer is conducive to the proliferation of mosquitoes, members of the public should stay vigilant and continue to carry out effective mosquito prevention and control measures.

Government finishes exercise on “restriction-testing declaration” in respect of specified “restricted area” in Ting Fung House, Ning Fung Court, Kwai Chung, and enforcement operation for breaches of compulsory testing notice

The Government yesterday (August 3) exercised the power under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap. 599J) to make a "restriction-testing declaration" effective from 5pm yesterday, under which people (hereafter referred to as "persons subject to compulsory testing") within the specified "restricted area" in Kwai Chung (i.e. Ting Fung House, Ning Fung Court, Kwai Chung) were required to stay in their premises and undergo compulsory testing. Persons subject to compulsory testing were required to stay in their premises until all such persons identified in the "restricted area" had undergone testing and the test results were mostly ascertained.

Moreover, the Government issued a compulsory testing notice yesterday, requiring persons who had been present at the above building for more than two hours from July 28 to August 3, 2022, even if they were not present in the "restricted area" at the time when the declaration took effect, to undergo compulsory testing on or before August 5, 2022.

The Government announced the completion of the compulsory testing exercise at around 7.35am today (August 4) and carried out enforcement action in the "restricted area" afterwards to verify that all people in the "restricted area" had undergone compulsory testing in accordance with the requirements of the relevant declaration and compulsory testing notice. The Government announced that the enforcement operation ended at around 10.15am today.

The Government provided food packs for persons subject to compulsory testing to facilitate their meal arrangements. Anti-epidemic proprietary Chinese medicines donated by the Central People's Government or procured with the co-ordination of the Central People's Government and rapid antigen test kits were also distributed to persons subject to compulsory testing to help them fight against the virus.

The Government thanks persons subject to compulsory testing for their support and understanding. With everyone's co-operation and efforts, coupled with the efforts of the testing contractors throughout the night, residents

have been informed about their testing results by SMS notification. After finishing the compulsory testing exercise at around 7.35am today, the Government took enforcement action in the "restricted area" immediately to verify that all people in the "restricted area" had undergone testing according to the requirements of the declaration and the compulsory testing notice. Persons who could present an SMS notification containing a negative testing result as proof of having undergone the compulsory testing could leave the "restricted area" through the designated exit after providing personal information to a prescribed officer. The enforcement operation was completed at around 10.15am. Test records of 379 persons subject to compulsory testing were checked. No person was found not having undergone compulsory testing. Taking into account the above situation, the Secretary for Health revoked the "restriction-testing declaration" in accordance with Cap. 599J (see attachment).

The Government reminds the 19 households who have not answered the door to undergo a nucleic acid test as soon as possible after reading the notices put up by the Government, in the hope of eliminating the possible risk of further spread of the virus in the community.

The Government thanks all participating government staff and the testing agencies for their hard work. The Government is also grateful to those subject to compulsory testing for their support and understanding, and their full co-operation during this period in undergoing testing and waiting for the results at home.

The Government will seriously follow up on the compliance situation of the compulsory testing notices and the "restriction-testing declaration" by persons subject to compulsory testing. Any person who fails to comply with the compulsory testing notices commits an offence and may be fined a fixed penalty of \$10,000. The person will also be issued with a compulsory testing order requiring him or her to undergo testing within a specified time frame. Failure to comply with the compulsory testing order or the "restriction-testing declaration" is an offence and the offender may be liable to a fine of level 5 (\$50,000) and imprisonment for six months.

Labour Department to hold occupational health public talks

The Labour Department (LD) will hold a public talk entitled "Infection Control in the Workplace" on August 11 (Thursday). The talk, designed for employees who may come into contact with pathogenic bacteria and viruses in the workplace, will explain how micro-organisms enter the human body and affect people's health. The concept of infection control in the workplace will also be covered.

The talk will be given by the LD's occupational health nurse at 3.30pm in the Lecture Theatre of the Hong Kong Central Library, 66 Causeway Road, Causeway Bay.

The LD will hold another talk entitled "Manual Handling Operations and Prevention of Back Injuries" on August 18 (Thursday). The talk will give a brief account of the structure and functions of the back, causes and preventive measures of back injuries, and proper manual handling operations. Demonstrations and practice of workplace exercises will be included.

The talk will be given by the LD's occupational hygienist and occupational health nurse at 3.30pm in the Lecture Hall of the Hong Kong Space Museum, 10 Salisbury Road, Tsim Sha Tsui.

Both talks will be given in Cantonese. Admission is free but pre-registration is required. Interested participants can register online (www.oshsreg.gov.hk). On-site registration is not available. Infection control measures taking into account the latest epidemic developments will be adopted at both venues. For enquiries, please call 2852 4040.