

# Hong Kong Customs and AFCD join hands to combat endangered species smuggling activities

Hong Kong Customs and the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) conducted a one-month joint enforcement operation codenamed "Shepherd" in May this year to combat endangered species smuggling activities at the airport, seaport, land boundary and railway control points.

During the operation, Customs detected 24 cases with seizures of about 5.3 tonnes of suspected endangered species with an estimated market value of about \$22 million and arrests of 14 persons. Among the seizures, over 5 tonnes were suspected scheduled dried shark fins of endangered species, with an estimated market value of about \$21 million, seized by Customs inside two imported seaborne containers. Apart from these, other suspected endangered species, including live turtles, dried seahorses and American ginseng were also seized.

"The joint operation was a great success. It is also a vivid demonstration of how the two departments' close co-operation effectively targets the activities of endangered species smuggling," the Group Head (Air Cargo Group) of Airport Command of Customs, Mr Cheung Ka-chung, said in summarising the operation today (June 16) at a joint press conference.

"Facing the endless smuggling tactics, Customs will stay vigilant and strengthen its efforts in intelligence collection and analysis for even more effective enforcement. Similar joint operations will be undertaken," he added.

"As the epidemic gradually levelled off and normal travel between Hong Kong and Mainland has been resumed since February 6, Customs detected 175 cases of suspected smuggling of endangered species in the first five months of this year, which has exceeded 60 per cent of the total number of cases detected last year. This reflects that endangered species smuggling activities had become relatively active recently. Customs and the AFCD will continue to work closely in combating illegal activities involving endangered species on all fronts."

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.

The Endangered Species Protection Officer of the AFCD, Dr Jenny Lau, reminded the public that any person who imports, exports or possesses endangered species not in accordance with the Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance will be liable to a maximum fine of \$10 million and imprisonment for 10 years upon conviction, while the relevant items will be confiscated. Members of the public are urged not to break the

law.

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