

Hong Kong Customs combats illicit cigarette activities (with photo)

Hong Kong Customs seized a total of about 1.26 million suspected illicit cigarettes with an estimated market value of about \$3.5 million and a duty potential of about \$2.4 million in Hong Kong International Airport and Fanling on August 29 and yesterday (September 5) respectively.

Customs officers inspected a batch of outbound air mail parcels in Hong Kong International Airport on August 29 and seized about 160 000 suspected illicit cigarettes inside the parcels.

After follow-up investigation, Customs officers yesterday further seized about 1.1 million suspected illicit cigarettes from a stone hut in Fanling. Two men, aged 25 and 26, were arrested. Customs believes the operation has smashed an illicit cigarette storage and distribution centre.

Investigation is ongoing.

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.

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).

