

Hong Kong Customs combats illicit cigarette activities (with photo)

Hong Kong Customs on June 18 and yesterday (June 19) seized about 250 000 suspected illicit heat-not-burn (HNB) products with an estimated market value of about \$700,000 and a duty potential of about \$500,000 at Hong Kong International Airport and in Sham Shui Po and Tai Kok Tsui.

Customs officers detected three cases of suspected illicit cigarette storage and distribution and seized the batch of suspected illicit HNB products inside a hand-carry bag of an arriving male passenger at Hong Kong International Airport, a shop in Sham Shui Po and a private car in Tai Kok Tsui.

During the operation, Customs officers arrested three men, aged between 31 and 57, and detained a cross-boundary private car suspected to be in connection with the case. Customs believes an HNB product smuggling syndicate was smashed.

Investigation is ongoing.

Customs is mounting a territory-wide anti-illicit cigarette operation codenamed "Net II" from June this year with a view to combating illicit cigarette activities on all fronts through a multi-pronged approach. The operation is ongoing.

Customs reminds members of the public that 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 (DCO), tobacco is among the dutiable goods to which the DCO applies. Any HNB product containing tobacco in content is also a dutiable item subject to the control of the DCO. Any person who possesses, sells or buys dutiable commodities without a valid license commits an offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$1 million and imprisonment for two years.

Members of the public may call Customs' hotline 2815 7711 regarding whether a specific tobacco or smoking product is under the regulation of the DCO. They may also report any suspected violation of the DCO to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk).

