

# Hong Kong Customs conducts large-scale operation to combat illicit heat-not-burn products and illicit cigarettes (with photos)

Hong Kong Customs has mounted a special operation codenamed "Sunny III" in the past month to combat smuggling of illicit heat-not-burn (HNB) products into Hong Kong. A total of 47 cases were detected across the territory and about 930 000 suspected illicit HNB products and about 220 000 suspected illicit cigarettes were seized with an estimated market value of about \$3.2 million and a duty potential of about \$2.2 million. Seventeen persons were arrested.

During the operation, Customs officers detected 36 cases on the smuggling front, including parcel, air cargo and land cargo channels, at Hong Kong International Airport and Lok Ma Chau Control Point. Seizures of about 720 000 suspected illicit HNB products were made.

The other 11 cases are storage, distribution and peddling cases. Customs officers seized about 210 000 suspected illicit HNB products and about 220 000 suspected illicit cigarettes in Yuen Long, Sheung Shui, Sha Tin, Kwai Chung, Cheung Sha Wan, Sham Shui Po, Mong Kok, Kwun Tong, Causeway Bay and Kennedy Town. Six suspected illicit HNB product storage units were raided and two vehicles suspected to be used for illicit HNB product distribution were detained.

Sixteen men and one woman, aged between 19 and 54, were arrested. Investigations of all the cases are ongoing and the likelihood of further arrests is not ruled out.

Customs will continue to take stringent enforcement action against all kinds of 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.

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 imports, possesses, sells or buys dutiable commodities without a valid licence commits an offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$1 million and imprisonment for two years.

It is an offence to buy and sell illicit cigarettes. Members of the public are urged not to break the law by purchasing online or using postal parcels for illegal import of illicit cigarettes.

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](mailto:crimereport@customs.gov.hk)).

