

Hong Kong Customs consecutively detects illegally imported medicine cases and seizes medicines worth over \$17 million (with photos)

Hong Kong Customs in the past two weeks consecutively detected 42 suspected cases of importing medicines not under and in accordance with a valid licence at Lok Ma Chau Control Point, and seized a total of 1 840 cartons of medicines connected with the cases. Together with the cases announced on September 30, Customs has seized suspected illegally imported medicines with an estimated market value of about \$17.8 million as of October 6. The market value of the goods has exceeded that of the total seizures of last year, which amounted to \$15.5 million. Twenty persons have been arrested in this series of cases.

During the period from September 22 to October 6, Customs seized medicines involved in the cases from 15 incoming lorries. Over 100 types of medicines were involved, mainly including 17 810 000 laxative tablets, 143 000 tablets of analgesic drugs, 95 000 liver oil pills, 36 000 gastrointestinal medicine tablets and 18 000 flu medicine tablets.

The seized medicines also included anti-alcohol pills, analgesic patches, flu granules, dermatitis ointment, stomachic powder, liquid nasal sprays, throat sprays, antifungal drugs, allergic rhinitis drugs and eye drops.

The case with the highest seizure value was uncovered on October 1, with 338 cartons of medicines seized, including liquid nasal sprays, analgesic patches and flu granules worth about \$3.4 million.

A total of 13 lorry drivers, aged between 35 and 58, were arrested at the control point. Further arrests of seven consignees aged between 28 and 48, including a male director of a trading company, were made after follow-up investigations.

Investigations on the cases are ongoing. The 20 arrested persons, comprising 16 men and four women, have been released on bail pending further investigation. The likelihood of further arrests is not ruled out.

Under the Import and Export Ordinance (IEO), any person who imports pharmaceutical products and medicines without a valid import licence commits an offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$500,000 and imprisonment for two years.

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

