

Hong Kong Customs detects first case of using imported gin from overseas to disguise as locally-distilled gin for sale (with photos)

Hong Kong Customs yesterday (April 15) conducted an enforcement operation in Tsuen Wan and detected the first case ever of using imported gin from overseas to disguise as locally-distilled gin for sale. During the operation, a total of 3 046 bottles of gin suspected to be involved with the case, a batch of labels and a set of still were seized with an estimated market value of about \$1.5 million in total.

Customs officers earlier noticed the sale of gin claimed as locally-distilled on a social media platform by a company claimed as a liquor manufacturing factory. A batch of 1 557 bottles of gin without any labels was also found imported from New Zealand by the company on April 12. The batch of gin was seized by the Customs for investigation during clearance.

After follow-up investigation, Customs yesterday conducted a search at the company's factory unit in Tsuen Wan where a further seizure, including 1 325 bottles of gin without labels, seven bottles bearing a label with printed words of "Distilled and Bottled", a batch of unused labels with the same printed words and a set of still suspected to be used for distilling or processing spirits, was made.

Investigation revealed that the company attempted to use imported gin from overseas to disguise as locally-distilled gin for sale. During the operation, a 40-year-old male director and a 29-year-old woman suspected to be in connection with the case were arrested.

Customs also recalled 157 bottles of the gin concerned from the distributor.

The total estimated market value of the gin seized in the case is about \$1.29 million. They have been passed to the Government Laboratory for testing. Investigation is ongoing.

Under the Trade Descriptions Ordinance (TDO), any person who supplies goods with a false trade description in the course of trade or business, or is in possession of any goods for sale with a false trade description, commits an offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$500,000 and imprisonment for five years.

Under the Dutiable Commodities Ordinance (DCO), the maximum penalty upon conviction for illegal possession of still is a fine of \$1 million and imprisonment for two years.

Members of the public may report any suspected violations of the TD0 or DC0 to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk).

