

[Hong Kong Customs detects large-scale illicit cigarette smuggling case and illicit cigarette storage centre with seizures worth about \\$82 million made \(with photo\)](#)

Hong Kong Customs conducted anti-illicit cigarette operations before the Christmas holiday, and detected a large-scale illicit cigarette seaborne smuggling case in Tuen Mun on November 29 and cracked down on a suspected illicit cigarette storage centre in Chai Wan on December 21 respectively. A total of about 22 million suspected illicit cigarettes with a total estimated market value of about \$82 million and a duty potential of about \$56 million were seized.

In the first case, Customs on November 29 intercepted a suspicious barge at the Tuen Mun Public Cargo Working Area and, after inspection, seized about nine million suspected illicit cigarettes inside a 40-foot container on board. A 21-year-old man suspected to be connected with the case was arrested.

After a follow-up investigation, Customs arrested a 46-year-old man suspected to be connected with the case at the loading area of a housing estate on Sceneway Road in Lam Tin in the early morning of December 21, and seized 220,000 suspected illicit cigarettes. Customs officers then escorted the man to an industrial building unit in Chai Wan for a search; there they further seized about 13 million suspected illicit cigarettes and successfully cracked down on a suspected illicit cigarette storage centre.

An investigation is ongoing. Customs will continue to trace the source and the flow of the illicit cigarettes. The likelihood of further arrests is not ruled out.

With the New Year holidays approaching, Customs will continue its risk assessment and intelligence analysis for interception at source as well as through its multi-pronged enforcement strategy targeting storage, distribution and peddling to spare no effort in combating 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.

Customs reminds members of the public that it is an offence to buy or sell illicit cigarettes. 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) or online form (eform.cefs.gov.hk/form/ced002/).

