

# Hong Kong Customs detects large-scale illicit cigarettes sea smuggling cases with seizure worth about \$114 million (with photos)

Hong Kong Customs yesterday (December 31) detected two large-scale illicit cigarette smuggling cases in the waters off Sai Wan and Cyberport and seized a total of about 25 million suspected illicit cigarettes, with an estimated market value of about \$114 million and a duty potential of about \$84 million, on board two fishing vessels.

Customs in the early morning of yesterday intercepted two suspicious fishing vessels in the waters off Sai Wan and Cyberport. Upon inspection, Customs officers seized about 10 million and 15 million suspected illicit cigarettes inside the compartments of the two vessels respectively. During the operation, a total of six non-local men, aged between 35 and 41, suspected to be connected with the cases were arrested.

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

The six arrested men will be charged with one count of importing unmanifested cargoes and one of them will be charged with "possession of goods to which the Dutiable Commodities Ordinance applies". They will appear at the Eastern Magistrates' Courts tomorrow (January 2).

Customs will continue its risk assessment and intelligence analysis for interception at source as well as through its multipronged 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 upon conviction.

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 182 8080 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account ([crimereport@customs.gov.hk](mailto:crimereport@customs.gov.hk)) or online form ([eform.cefs.gov.hk/form/ced002/](http://eform.cefs.gov.hk/form/ced002/)).

