

# Hong Kong Customs detects largest counterfeit medicines case in past decade (with photos)

Hong Kong Customs mounted a special operation codenamed "Sniper" on December 10 to combat the sale of counterfeit medicines. About 2.4 million tablets and 470 litres of suspected counterfeit medicines, as well as 3 200 items of suspected counterfeit cosmetics products, were seized. The total estimated market value of the seizure is about \$13.8 million. This case involves the largest quantity of suspected counterfeit medicines seized by Customs in the past decade.

Through intelligence analysis, Customs earlier discovered a syndicate distributing and selling suspected counterfeit medicines in the retail market. After an in-depth investigation with the assistance of trademark owners, Customs officers took enforcement action on December 10 and smashed a packing-cum-storage centre in Chai Wan operated by the counterfeit medicine syndicate. About 2.4 million tablets and 470 litres of suspected counterfeit medicines were seized, involving more than 20 types of medicines, including controlled medicines. Some 3 200 items of suspected counterfeit cosmetics products were also seized. A 43-year-old male operator was arrested.

On the same day, Customs raided four medicine stores in Sheung Shui, Yuen Long and Yau Ma Tei to combat the retail network of the syndicate. A batch of suspected counterfeit medicines and suspected counterfeit cosmetics products were further seized. Six men, including five persons-in-charge and one salesperson, aged between 26 and 56, were arrested.

The seven arrested men have been released on bail pending further investigation. Investigation is ongoing.

Customs believes that the operation has successfully demolished a syndicate distributing and selling suspected counterfeit medicines. The department will continue to take stringent law enforcement action and maintain close contact with relevant trademark owners, government departments and organisations, as well as keep track of the market, with a view to combatting counterfeit medicine activities.

Customs reminds traders that selling counterfeit medicine is a serious crime and offenders face criminal liability. Consumers are also reminded to purchase goods at reputable shops and to check with the trademark owners or authorised agents if authenticity of a product is in doubt.

Under the Trade Descriptions Ordinance, any person who sells or possesses for sale any goods with a forged trademark commits an offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$500,000 and imprisonment for five years.

Under the Pharmacy and Poisons Ordinance, any person who possesses any poison included in Part 1 of the Poisons List other than in accordance with provisions commits an offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$100,000 and imprisonment for two years.

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

