

Hong Kong Customs detects largest smuggling case on record (with photos)

Hong Kong Customs detected a suspected speedboat smuggling case last month and seized a batch of suspected smuggled goods with an estimated market value of about \$210 million. Seizures included high-value goods, expensive food ingredients and scheduled endangered species. This is the largest smuggling case among all forms of smuggling by air, sea and land detected by Customs on record in terms of the seizure value.

Customs targeted an organised smuggling syndicate active in Lung Kwu Tan since June this year and conducted a joint enforcement operation with the Marine Police's Small Boat Division on September 23 after months of in-depth investigations. Customs officers and Marine Police officers spotted several suspicious men moving cartons from a lorry to a speedboat at a seashore in Lung Kwu Tan. The officers then took action and those men immediately jumped onto the speedboat and fled.

Customs officers seized a lorry suspected to be connected with the case at the scene. After a follow-up investigation, Customs officers raided a storehouse in the vicinity and further seized three lorries suspected to be connected with the case and a large batch of suspected smuggled goods, including luxury handbags, valuable watches, expensive food ingredients and specimens of highly endangered species.

During the operation, a 34-year-old man and four lorries suspected to be in connection with the case were arrested and detained respectively.

An investigation is ongoing. The arrested man has been released on bail pending further investigation, and further arrests are not ruled out.

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.

Under the Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance, any person found guilty of importing or exporting an endangered species without a licence is liable to a maximum fine of \$10 million and imprisonment for 10 years.

Customs will continue to take stringent enforcement action to combat sea smuggling activities.

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

