

Hong Kong Customs detects seaborne illicit cigarette smuggling cases with seizure worth about \$59 million (with photos)

In the past two weeks, Hong Kong Customs stepped up enforcement to combat illicit cigarette smuggling activities by sea and detected two related cases involving seaborne containers. A total of about 13 million suspected illicit cigarettes with an estimated market value of about \$59 million and a duty potential of about \$43 million were seized.

For the first case, through risk assessment and intelligence analysis, Customs selected and inspected a 40-foot container, arriving from Japan to Hong Kong and declared as carrying cosmetic products, on April 30 at the Kwai Chung Customhouse Cargo Examination Compound. Upon inspection, Customs officers seized 2 million suspected illicit cigarettes inside the container.

Customs detected another case at the Kwai Chung Customhouse Cargo Examination Compound where officers inspected two 40-foot containers, declared as carrying furniture and arriving in Hong Kong from Taiwan, on May 2. A total of about 11 million suspected illicit cigarettes were seized therein.

Investigations of the two cases are ongoing.

Customs will continue its risk assessment and intelligence analysis, and step up enforcement actions to combat the smuggling of illicit cigarettes.

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 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/).

