

Hong Kong Customs detects suspected case of smuggling scheduled dried shark fins from air passenger (with photo)

Following the detection of a suspected case of smuggling scheduled dried shark fins from an air passenger at Hong Kong International Airport on November 23, Hong Kong Customs on November 24 detected another similar case and seized over 450 kilograms of dried shark fins, including suspected dried shark fins of scheduled endangered species with an estimated market value of about \$1.3 million at the airport.

A 35-year-old male passenger arrived at Hong Kong from Brazil via Ethiopia on November 24. Upon arrival, he made a Customs declaration for the batch of controlled items and presented an image of a Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) document to Customs officers. The documents were later confirmed invalid by officers of the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD). AFCD officers later confirmed some of the dried shark fins in his 15 pieces of check-in baggage are of endangered species listed in CITES Appendix II and regulated under the Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance (the Ordinance).

It was discovered in both cases that crime syndicates not only attempted to use forged or invalid documents, but also deliberately sourced dried shark fins that were yet to be regulated and mixed them with the scheduled ones in order to evade detection.

The Government has gazetted the amendment to the Ordinance to bring more shark species under the control of the Ordinance from December 15, 2023 onwards. The Customs and the AFCD will continue to take vigorous enforcement action to combat smuggling of endangered species.

Hong Kong Customs reminds the public not to carry controlled items, including shark products such as dried shark fins, into and out of Hong Kong.

Under the 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.

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) or online form (eform.cefs.gov.hk/form/ced002).

