

Hong Kong Customs detects suspected smuggling case worth about \$1.2 billion (with photos)

Hong Kong Customs detected a suspected smuggling case by a river trade vessel in the eastern waters of Hong Kong on October 14. A batch of suspected smuggled goods with an estimated market value of about \$1.2 billion was seized, including expensive food ingredients, electronic goods, high-value goods and scheduled endangered species. This is the largest smuggling case detected by Hong Kong Customs on record in terms of the seizure value.

With Hong Kong and Mainland law enforcement agencies' recent rigorous enforcement actions against cross-boundary smuggling activities by speedboats and land, it has been noticed that criminals have switched to using other maritime conveyances for smuggling activities in order to evade detection. Therefore, Customs has stepped up maritime patrols and interceptions.

Customs conducted an operation against sea smuggling on October 14. A river trade vessel was intercepted in the eastern waters of Hong Kong that night when it was about to head towards Mainland waters.

After examination, Customs officers found a batch of suspected smuggled goods with an estimated market value of about \$1.2 billion in 24 of the containers on board, including expensive food ingredients, smartphones, tablets, luxury handbags, cosmetics and scheduled endangered species.

After a follow-up investigation, Customs officers arrested a 39-year-old woman and a 56-year-old man suspected to be in connection with the case and detained the containers involved.

An investigation is ongoing. The two arrested persons have 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.

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).

