

Hong Kong Customs detects three smuggling cases with seizure of tobacco products worth about \$41 million (with photos)

Hong Kong Customs yesterday (July 27) detected three smuggling cases of tobacco products in Kwai Chung and seized about 3.3 million suspected illicit cigarettes and about 5 600 kilograms of suspected duty-not-paid manufactured tobacco products. The total estimated market value was about \$41 million, with a duty potential of about \$25.4 million.

Customs yesterday detected two cases at a logistics centre in Kwai Chung. In the first case, Customs officers seized about 1.4 million suspected illicit cigarettes inside a batch of goods declared as gift boxes. The estimated market value of the suspected illicit cigarettes was about \$5.1 million with a duty potential of about \$3.4 million.

In the second case, through risk assessment, Customs inspected two batches of goods respectively declared as storage boxes and vacuum pumps. Upon inspection, Customs officers seized a total of about 1.9 million suspected illicit cigarettes and about 3 900kg of suspected duty-not-paid manufactured tobacco products, with a total estimated market value of about \$27 million and a duty potential of about \$1.7 million.

On the same day, Customs detected the third case in another logistics centre in the same district. About 1 700kg of suspected duty-not-paid manufactured tobacco products, with an estimated market value of about \$9 million and a duty potential of about \$5 million, were found inside two batches of goods which were declared as electric welding machines and tapes respectively.

After preliminary investigations, Customs believes that the batch of suspected illicit cigarettes and duty-not-paid manufactured tobacco products will be transhipped to Australia.

An investigation is ongoing.

Customs will continue its risk assessment and intelligence analysis, and step up enforcement actions to combat 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/).

