

Hong Kong Customs detects two sea-bound smuggling cases in one day and makes record seizure of donkey skins (with photos)

Hong Kong Customs yesterday (April 15) detected two sea-bound smuggling cases in a row at the Kwai Chung Customhouse Cargo Examination Compound and seized about 17 tonnes of suspected smuggled donkey skins, about 520 kilograms of suspected smuggled sea cucumbers, about 2kg of suspected smuggled fish maws and about one tonne of suspected scheduled dried shark fins, with a total estimated market value of about \$2 million. The donkey skin seizure is the biggest ever in Hong Kong.

Through risk assessment, Customs officers in the first case selected and inspected a container declared to be carrying table salt that arrived in Hong Kong from Egypt. The batch of suspected smuggled donkey skins, sea cucumbers and fish maws was found inside the container. An investigation is ongoing.

This is the second donkey skin smuggling case detected by Customs within a week. Customs officers seized about 16 tonnes of suspected smuggled donkey skins from a container on April 9, which also arrived in Hong Kong from Egypt and was declared to be carrying table salt. Donkey skin has a wide variety of uses. After processing, it could be manufactured as donkey-hide gelatin, also known as "Ejiao".

The second sea-bound smuggling case yesterday was also detected through risk assessment. Customs officers selected a container arriving in Hong Kong from Sri Lanka for inspection and found the batch of suspected scheduled dried shark fins mix-loaded with non-scheduled dried shark fins inside the container. The case was handed over to the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department for follow-up investigation.

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 step up stringent enforcement actions to combat smuggling and other illegal activities through passenger and cargo channels at the airport, seaport and all land boundary control points.

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).

