

Hong Kong Customs detects two suspected illicit cigarette distribution cases (with photos)

Hong Kong Customs yesterday and today (October 8 and 9) detected two suspected illicit cigarette distribution cases in Kwai Chung and Wong Tai Sin. A total of about 1.27 million suspected illicit cigarettes, with a total estimated market value of about \$5.74 million and a duty potential of about \$4.2 million, were seized.

In the first case, Customs conducted anti-illicit cigarette operations in the vicinity of Kwai Chung yesterday evening. Customs officers intercepted two lorries on the roadside of Kwai Hei Street. Customs officers found about 1.27 million suspected illicit cigarettes in one of the lorries and arrested two men aged 30 and 46 who were moving the goods. They claimed to be a driver and a logistics worker. After a preliminary investigation, Customs officers further arrested a 31-year-old woman on the spot, who claimed to be unemployed, for further investigation. Customs will continue to trace the source and whereabouts of the illicit cigarettes. The three arrested persons have been released on bail pending further investigation.

In the second case, Customs conducted an anti-illicit cigarette operation in Wong Tai Sin this morning. About 4 500 suspected illicit cigarettes were seized in a store near Lower Wong Tai Sin Estate, and a 44-year-old male person-in-charge of the store was arrested. The arrested man has been charged with "dealing with goods to which the Dutiable Commodities Ordinance applies" and will appear at the Kowloon City Magistrates' Courts on October 23.

Customs will continue its risk assessment and intelligence analysis for interception at source as well as through its multipronged enforcement strategy targeting storage, distribution and peddling to spare no effort in combating illicit cigarette activities.

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 182 8080 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk) or online form (eform.cefs.gov.hk/form/ced002/).

