

Hong Kong Customs makes first-ever detection of counterfeit goods sales by counterfeiting syndicate in name of online shopping agent (with photo)

Hong Kong Customs conducted an operation on January 20 to crack down on a counterfeiting syndicate involved in the sale of counterfeit goods on online platforms in the name of a shopping agent. In the first case of its kind, Customs seized about 1 100 items of suspected counterfeit goods with an estimated market value of about \$1.1 million.

Customs earlier received complaints alleging that suspected counterfeit goods were put on sale online in the name of a shopping agent. Through a big-data analytics system, Customs officers found that a counterfeiting syndicate set up multiple accounts on a common social media platform, and solicited business in the name of shopping agent and by promotion online. Upon receiving orders, the counterfeiting syndicate would ask the buyers to transfer money to designated bank accounts. The suspected counterfeit goods would then be packaged in a storage centre and delivered to buyers via courier.

After an in-depth investigation with the assistance of trademark owners, Customs officers took enforcement action on January 20 and raided a storage and packaging centre in Kwai Chung, where the batch of suspected counterfeit goods including handbags, clothing and shoes were seized.

During the operation, one man and four women, aged between 23 and 56, were arrested.

An investigation is ongoing.

Customs appeals to consumers to procure goods offered by reputable shops and websites with favourable comments and to check with the trademark owners or authorised agents if the authenticity of a product is in doubt.

Under the Trade Descriptions Ordinance, any person who sells or possesses for sale any goods with a forged trademark commits an offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$500,000 and imprisonment for five years.

Members of the public may report any suspected infringement activities to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk).

