

## Hong Kong Customs makes suspected scheduled fresh totoaba fish maw seizure worth about \$44 million this year (with photos)

Hong Kong Customs seized about 114 kilograms of suspected scheduled fresh totoaba fish maws with an estimated market value of about \$18 million at the Hong Kong International Airport on October 27, followed by the arrest of one man the day after (October 28). This is the second seizure of more than 100 kilograms of its type since the first was made in June, making a total seizure of more than 274 kilograms worth about \$44 million so far this year.

Through risk assessment, Customs officers inspected an air consignment declared as frozen squid that arrived in Hong Kong from Mexico. The suspected scheduled fresh *Totoaba macdonaldi* fish maws were found mix-loading with frozen squid in nine styrofoam boxes.

Follow-up investigation led to the discovery of an industrial building unit in Fanling one day after the seizure, which was suspiciously used as a storehouse. A 39-year-old man was arrested inside the unit.

Investigation is ongoing and the arrested man has been released on bail pending further investigation.

In June this year, Customs seized about 160 kilograms of suspected scheduled fresh totoaba fish maws with an estimated market value of about \$25 million at the airport. The haul breaks the past single seizure records of its type both in terms of weight and market value. It also surpasses the aggregate seizure quantity in Customs' records.

Compared to those seized before that were all dried products, the latest seizure and the one made in June are in fresh condition.

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.

With the recent reduction in air passenger traffic, Customs has been stepping up its enforcement action against trafficking activities of prohibited and controlled items through air cargo, postal parcel and express courier channels.

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](mailto:crimereport@customs.gov.hk)).

