

Hong Kong Customs mounts joint operation with Mainland Customs to combat cross-boundary endangered species smuggling activities (with photos)

Hong Kong Customs mounted a joint operation with Mainland Customs on January 16 to combat cross-boundary endangered species smuggling activities. During the operation, Hong Kong Customs seized about 8 300 kilograms of suspected pangolin scales and 2 100 kilograms of suspected ivory tusks with an estimated market value of about \$62 million from a container at the Kwai Chung Customhouse Cargo Examination Compound. This is the largest amount pangolin scales ever seized by Hong Kong Customs.

Acting on information from Mainland Customs and through intelligence analysis and risk assessment, Hong Kong Customs inspected a 40-foot container declared to contain frozen beef arriving from Nigeria. Upon inspection, Customs officers found the batch of suspected pangolin scales and ivory tusks inside the container.

Follow-up investigation resulted in the arrest of a male proprietor and a female staff member, aged 39 and 29 respectively, of a trading company in Mong Kok.

Investigation is ongoing and all arrested persons have been released on bail pending further 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.

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).

