

Hong Kong Customs mounts operation against illicit heat-not-burn products (with photos)

Hong Kong Customs mounted an operation codenamed "Sunny" in early July to combat smuggling of illicit heat-not-burn (HNB) products into Hong Kong, seizing about 1 million suspected illicit HNB products with an estimated market value of about \$3 million and a duty potential of about \$2 million. The seizures took place at Chek Lap Kok, Tung Chung, Sheung Shui and Sham Shui Po respectively.

Through risk assessment, Customs officers intercepted a number of incoming passengers arriving from Japan at Hong Kong International Airport in early July and seized about 200 000 suspected illicit HNB products from their personal baggage. Six male passengers and five female passengers were arrested.

Customs officers also stepped up patrols downtown. Nine men and five women were arrested in Chek Lap Kok, Tung Chung, Sheung Shui and Sham Shui Po and about 800 000 suspected illicit HNB products were seized.

Through the entire operation so far, Customs has arrested 15 men and 10 women, aged between 20 and 62, while detaining one private car suspected to be connected with the case. Customs believes that an HNB products smuggling syndicate was smashed.

The investigation is ongoing.

Customs reminds members of the public that under the Dutiable Commodities Ordinance (DCO), tobacco products are dutiable goods to which the DCO applies. Any HNB products containing tobacco in content is also dutiable goods subject to the control of the DCO. Any person who imports, possesses, sells or buys dutiable commodities without a valid licence commits an offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$1 million and imprisonment for two years.

Members of the public may call the Customs' hotline at 2815 7711 to enquire whether a specific tobacco or smoking product is under the regulation of the DCO. They may also report any suspected violation of the DCO to Customs' 24-hour hotline at 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk).

