

Hong Kong Customs raids large-scale “cheap whites” storage centre (with photo)

Hong Kong Customs yesterday (June 13) raided a large-scale storage centre in San Tin, Yuen Long, for suspected duty-not-paid cigarettes (commonly known as "cheap whites") and seized about 10.6 million suspected illicit cigarettes with an estimated market value of about \$48 million and a duty potential of about \$35 million. About 7.3 million suspected illicit cigarettes seized were "cheap whites", accounting for about 70 per cent of the total seizure. It was the largest case of "cheap whites" detected by Customs this year.

Upon searching a metal shed of about 2 000 square feet in Wing Ping Village, San Tin, yesterday afternoon, Customs seized the batch of suspected illicit cigarettes from three containers there and arrested two men, aged 44 and 66, suspected to be connected with the case.

The case is still under investigation. The two arrested men have been released on bail pending further investigation.

Customs will continue to trace the source and whereabouts of the illicit cigarettes, and believes that some of the seized "cheap whites" would have been exported to other countries.

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 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk) or online form (eform.cefs.gov.hk/form/ced002).

