

Hong Kong Customs raids suspected illicit cigarette and manufactured tobacco storage centre in Tsuen Wan (with photo)

Hong Kong Customs yesterday (October 9) raided a suspected illicit cigarette and manufactured tobacco storage centre in Tsuen Wan and seized about 2.3 million suspected illicit cigarettes and about 280 kilograms of suspected duty-not-paid manufactured tobacco, with an estimated market value of about \$12.3 million and a duty potential of about \$8.8 million.

During the anti-illicit cigarette operation conducted in Tsuen Wan last night, Customs intercepted a suspicious man moving suspected illicit cigarettes into a warehouse in an industrial building on Wang Lung Street, Tsuen Wan. Subsequently, Customs seized the batch of suspected illicit cigarettes and manufactured tobacco from the warehouse and a truck. The man, aged 35, who claimed to be a driver, was arrested.

Customs will continue to trace the source of the illicit cigarettes, and the likelihood of further arrests is not ruled out.

The arrested man has been charged with "dealing with goods to which the Dutiable Commodities Ordinance applies" and will appear at the West Kowloon Magistrates' Courts on October 12.

Customs stresses that it is an offence to buy or sell illicit cigarettes. 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.

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Members of the public may report any suspected illicit cigarette activities to Customs' 24-hour hotline 182 80 80 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk) or online form (eform.cefs.gov.hk/form/ced002).

