

Hong Kong Customs raids suspected illicit cigarette storage centre in Mong Kok (with photo)

Hong Kong Customs yesterday (June 14) raided a suspected illicit cigarette storage centre in Mong Kok and seized about 190 000 suspected illicit cigarettes with an estimated market value of about \$700,000 and a duty potential of about \$480,000.

Customs officers intercepted a woman on Playing Field Road in Mong Kok yesterday in the early morning and seized about 7 000 suspected illicit cigarettes inside a shopping trolley and a recycling bag carried by her. The 82-year-old woman was subsequently arrested. Customs officers later escorted the woman to her home in the same area for a search and further seized about 180 000 suspected illicit cigarettes at the residential premises.

An initial investigation revealed that the illicit cigarette storage centre involved in the case was mainly used to supply illicit cigarettes to residents in Yau Tsim Mong District.

An investigation is ongoing. Customs will continue to trace the source and the flow of the illicit cigarettes. The likelihood of further arrests is not ruled out.

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.

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.

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).

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