

Hong Kong Customs raids suspected illicit cigarette storage centre in Sham Shui Po (with photos)

Hong Kong Customs yesterday (July 19) raided a suspected illicit cigarette storage centre in Sham Shui Po and seized about 420 000 suspected illicit cigarettes with an estimated market value of about \$1.5 million and a duty potential of about \$1 million.

Customs conducted anti-illicit cigarette operation in Sham Shui Po and intercepted a woman in Apliu Street last night. A small amount of suspected illicit cigarettes was seized inside a nylon bag carried by her. The 53-year-old woman who claimed to be a cleaner was subsequently arrested. Customs officers later escorted the woman to a subdivided unit in the same district for a search and further seized about 420 000 suspected illicit cigarettes, successfully smashing a suspected illicit cigarette storage centre. A 55-year-old man who was the husband of the woman was also arrested in the unit. He claimed to be a construction worker.

An initial investigation revealed that the illicit cigarette storage centre involved in the case was mainly used to supply illicit cigarettes to residents in the Sham Shui Po District.

The two arrested persons will be charged with "dealing with goods to which the Dutiable Commodities Ordinance applies".

Customs will continue its risk assessment and intelligence analysis for interception at source as well as through its multi-pronged 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) or online form (eform.cefs.gov.hk/form/ced002/).

