

Hong Kong Customs raids suspected illicit cigarette storage centre with seizures worth about \$60 million (with photo)

Hong Kong Customs yesterday (September 6) raided a large-scale suspected illicit cigarette storage centre in Tsuen Wan and seized about 16 million suspected illicit cigarettes with an estimated market value of about \$60 million and a duty potential of about \$41 million.

Customs earlier identified an illicit cigarette syndicate active in Tsuen Wan District. The syndicate often uses industrial building units to store considerable amounts of illicit cigarettes and distributes them during late-night periods to evade Customs' inspections. Upon investigation, Customs officers subsequently conducted an enforcement action during the early hours yesterday and raided an industrial building unit on Wang Lung Street, Tsuen Wan. The batch of suspected illicit cigarettes were seized therein and two men, aged 39 and 54, who were suspected to be connected with the case, were arrested.

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The two arrested persons were charged with "dealing with goods to which the Dutiable Commodities Ordinance applies" and will appear at the West Kowloon Magistrates' Courts tomorrow (September 8). Customs will continue to trace the source and flow of the illicit cigarettes. The likelihood of further arrests is not ruled out.

Customs will also 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.

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/).

