

# Hong Kong Customs raids two suspected illicit cigarette storage centres in public rental housing anti-illicit cigarette operations (with photos)

Hong Kong Customs yesterday (April 12) and today (April 13) conducted anti-illicit cigarette operations in the public rental housing (PRH) in Tuen Mun and Sau Mau Ping respectively. Two suspected illicit cigarette storage centres were raided and a total of about 150 000 suspected illicit cigarettes with an estimated market value of about \$550,000 and a duty potential of about \$370,000 were seized.

In the first case, Customs officers intercepted a light goods vehicle in Butterfly Estate, Tuen Mun, at noon yesterday. Upon inspection, about 80 000 suspected illicit cigarettes were seized inside the vehicle. A 56-year-old male driver suspected to be connected with the case was arrested and the vehicle suspected to be used for storing and distributing illicit cigarettes was detained.

In the second case, Customs officers smashed another suspected illicit cigarette storage centre in a unit of On Tat Estate, Sau Mau Ping, on the same afternoon. About 57 000 suspected illicit cigarettes were seized and a 28-year-old man, who claimed to be a staff member of a courier company, was arrested in the unit. After a follow-up investigation, Customs officers this morning further seized about 8 000 suspected illicit cigarettes in a parcel arriving from Korea at the Sau Mau Ping Post Office.

An initial investigation revealed that the two illicit cigarette storage centres involved in the cases were mainly used to supply illicit cigarettes to residents of PRH in the districts.

The two arrested men were charged with "dealing with goods to which the Dutiable Commodities Ordinance applies". Customs will continue to trace the source and the flow of the illicit cigarettes. The likelihood of further arrests is not ruled out.

Customs has all along been enhancing enforcement against illicit cigarette activities on all fronts, including cross-boundary smuggling, storage and distribution as well as peddling, through intelligence analysis. If PRH units are found to be involved in illicit cigarette activities, Customs will notify the Housing Department for follow-up action after the conclusion of court proceedings.

Customs reminds members of the public 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](mailto:crimereport@customs.gov.hk)).

