

Hong Kong Customs raids two suspected illicit cigarette storage centres (with photo)

Hong Kong Customs yesterday (August 10) conducted anti-illicit cigarette operations in Tsuen Wan and successfully raided two suspected illicit cigarette storage centres. A total of about 440 000 suspected illicit cigarettes with an estimated market value of about \$1.6 million and a duty potential of about \$1.1 million were seized.

In the first case, Customs officers raided a unit in an industrial building on Sha Tsui Road, Tsuen Wan, in the early morning yesterday and seized about 390 000 suspected illicit cigarettes. A 29-year-old man suspected to be connected with the case was arrested.

In the second case, Customs officers intercepted a man on Sha Tsui Road on the same afternoon and seized about 2 000 suspected illicit cigarettes in his backpack. The 60-year-old man was subsequently arrested. Customs officers later escorted the man to his residential premises in the same district for a search and further seized about 48 000 suspected illicit cigarettes there.

An initial investigation revealed that the suspected illicit cigarette storage centres involved in the two cases were mainly used to supply illicit cigarettes to residents in the Tsuen Wan District. Investigations of both cases are ongoing and 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 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/).

