

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

Hong Kong Customs yesterday (December 13) conducted anti-illicit cigarette operations in Tsim Sha Tsui and Yuen Long, and successfully cracked down on two suspected illicit cigarette storage centres. A total of about 2.75 million suspected illicit cigarettes with a total estimated market value of about \$10 million and a duty potential of about \$6.9 million were seized.

In the first case, Customs officers raided a unit of a sub-divided flat on Nathan Road, Tsim Sha Tsui, yesterday afternoon and seized about 650 000 suspected illicit cigarettes therein. A 60-year-old women who claimed to be unemployed and suspected to be connected with the case was arrested.

In the second case, Customs officers on the same afternoon further seized about 2.1 million suspected illicit cigarettes inside a metal hut on Kam Po Road in Yuen Long, successfully shutting down another suspected illicit cigarette storage centre. Two 36-year-old men, both claiming to be workers, suspected to be connected with the case were arrested.

The three arrested persons have been charged with "dealing with goods to which the Dutiable Commodities Ordinance applies", and the two cases will be brought up at the Kowloon City Magistrates' Courts on December 20 and the Tuen Mun Magistrates' Courts tomorrow (December 15) respectively.

With the Christmas and New Year holidays approaching, 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 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) or online form (eform.cefs.gov.hk/form/ced002/).

