

[Hong Kong Customs records vigorous enforcement results in combating illicit cigarette activities \(with photo\)](#)

Hong Kong Customs mounted anti-illicit cigarette special operations last week in view of the arrival of the summer holidays. A total of 20 relevant cases were detected and a total of about 97 million suspected illicit cigarettes with an estimated market value of about \$270 million and a duty potential of about \$180 million were seized across the territory. Customs has so far this year seized about 259 million suspected illicit cigarettes, signifying vigorous law enforcement results.

One of the cases detected last week set a record for the largest cigarette smuggling case detected by Customs in the past 21 years. In this case, Customs officers on July 6 intercepted a container truck near Ha Tsuen Road, Yuen Long, and seized about 14 million suspected illicit cigarettes inside a 40-foot container. After an initial investigation, Customs officers searched six more containers at two container yards nearby and further seized about 64 million suspected illicit cigarettes inside the containers. During the operation, a total of about 78 million suspected illicit cigarettes with an estimated market value of about \$220 million and a duty potential of about \$150 million were seized. A 58-year-old male driver suspected to be connected with the case was arrested and seven containers suspected to be involved in the case were detained.

Investigation is ongoing. Customs will continue to trace the source and the flow of the illicit cigarettes. The likelihood of further arrests is not ruled out.

Including the suspected illicit cigarettes seized in this operation, Customs has seized about 259 million suspected illicit cigarettes this year as at yesterday (July 14), an increase of about 21 per cent compared to the figure for the same period last year.

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.

Smuggling is a serious offence. Under the Import and Export Ordinance, any person found guilty of importing or exporting unmanifested cargo is liable to a maximum fine of \$2 million and imprisonment for seven years.

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).

