

Hong Kong Customs seizes about 15 000 suspected counterfeit medical-grade face masks (with photo)

Hong Kong Customs yesterday (February 21) mounted a special operation against counterfeit face masks and seized about 15 000 suspected counterfeit medical-grade face masks with an estimated market value of about \$30,000.

Customs received information alleging that suspected counterfeit face masks were being offered for sale in the local market yesterday. After an investigation with the assistance of the trademark owner, Customs took enforcement action on the same day and raided a temporary stall at a shopping mall in Ho Man Tin. The batch of suspected counterfeit medical-grade face masks was seized and a 41-year-old woman suspected to be in connection with the case was arrested.

Customs is looking into the source of the face masks involved in the case. Samples will be sent to a laboratory for a safety test.

Investigation is ongoing and the arrested woman has been released on bail pending further investigation.

Under the Trade Descriptions Ordinance (TDO), any person who sells or possesses for sale any goods with a forged trademark commits an offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$500,000 and imprisonment for five years.

Customs has conducted a territory-wide special operation codenamed "Guardian" since January 27, 2020, to conduct spot checks and enforcement operations on common protective items. Up to January 31, 2022, more than 7 600 officers have been mobilised to conduct more than 44 000 inspections at retail spots. Investigations into 39 cases under the TDO and the Consumer Goods Safety Ordinance (CGSO) were launched, with 90 arrests and seizures of 38.54 million surgical masks and other virus-protective products worth \$144 million.

Members of the public may report any suspected violation of the TDO or the CGSO to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk).

