

Hong Kong Customs seizes cannabidiol products suspected of containing tetrahydro-cannabinol worth about \$14.6 million (with photos)

Hong Kong Customs has mounted a special operation codenamed "Wind Rider" since mid-January this year, targeting cannabidiol (CBD) products containing tetrahydro-cannabinol (THC) in the market.

Customs officers on January 11 inspected a batch of CBD products at Hong Kong International Airport. Although it was marked as "THC free" on the packaging, Customs officers were still doubtful about it. After examination by the Government Laboratory, it was revealed that most of the CBD products had contained THC. Customs officers therefore conducted immediate follow-up investigation.

During follow-up investigation, Customs officers test-purchased several CBD products available in the market and then sent them to the Government Laboratory for examination. The result revealed that those products also contained THC. Based on the investigation result and intelligence analysis, Customs officers conducted an enforcement operation on January 19 and 20. Seven retail shops selling CBD products located in different districts, including three branches of a large chain retailer, and two warehouses in Cheung Sha Wan and Kwai Chung were raided.

During the operation, Customs seized about 25 000 items of CBD products suspected of containing THC, including CBD oil, skin care products and pet treats, with a total estimated market value of about \$14.6 million. Five men and four women aged between 21 and 44, suspected to be in connection with the case, were arrested.

An investigation is ongoing and the arrested persons were released on bail pending further investigation.

Customs reminds members of the public that THC is classified as dangerous drugs under the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance (DDO). Importation of products containing THC into Hong Kong is prohibited unless the relevant provisions in the DDO are complied with. In order to avoid breaching the law inadvertently, special attention should be paid to the packaging labels of relevant products.

Under the DDO, trafficking in a dangerous drug is a serious offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$5 million and life imprisonment.

Members of the public may report any suspected drug trafficking activities to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-

reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk). They may also contact Customs for follow up if it is suspected that they have purchased products involved in this case.

