

Hong Kong Customs seizes suspected duty-not-paid water pipe tobacco and cigarettes (with photos)

Hong Kong Customs yesterday (November 7) seized about 1 200 kilograms of suspected duty-not-paid water pipe tobacco and 130 000 suspected duty-not-paid cigarettes with a total estimated market value of about \$3.5 million and a duty potential of about \$3 million at Hong Kong International Airport (HKIA) and Hung Hom.

Through risk assessment, Customs officers inspected an air consignment, declared to be carrying molasses, arriving in Hong Kong from Beijing at HKIA. Upon inspection, Customs officers found the batch of suspected duty-not-paid water pipe tobacco in 198 carton boxes. Investigation is ongoing.

Also, Customs officers yesterday intercepted a 72-year-old man in Hung Hom during an anti-illicit cigarette operation and found about 3 400 suspected illicit cigarettes in his possession. Later, about 130 000 suspected illicit cigarettes were further seized at a residential unit in the district. The 72-year-old man and another 63-year-old woman suspected to be connected with the case were arrested. They were charged for contravening the Dutiable Commodities Ordinance (DCO) and will appear at Kowloon City Magistrates' Courts on November 21.

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.

Under the DCO, anyone involved in dealing with, possession of, selling or buying duty-not-paid tobacco 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 tobacco activities to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk).

