

Hong Kong Customs seizes suspected illicit cigarettes

Hong Kong Customs yesterday (September 4) mounted an operation to combat smuggling activities using cross-boundary students and their escorts at Lo Wu Control Point. About 600 suspected illicit cigarettes were seized with an estimated market value of about \$1,600 and a duty potential of about \$1,100.

Customs officers intercepted a female cross-boundary student escort for inspection at Lo Wu Control Point yesterday. The batch of suspected illicit cigarettes was found concealed around her waist and inside her trouser pocket. The 45-year-old woman was then arrested.

Customs is very concerned about the use of cross-boundary students for smuggling purposes. Apart from stepping up customs checks on cross-boundary students, their escorts and parents travelling with them, the department has also stepped up publicity and education efforts.

Designated clearance passages for cross-boundary students have been installed in customs halls and young students are advised to keep a watchful eye over their personal belongings at all times to prevent smugglers from making use of them for smuggling purposes.

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).