

[Hong Kong Customs seizes suspected illicit cigarettes and electronic cigarettes suspected of containing nicotine worth about \\$45 million \(with photo\)](#)

Hong Kong Customs today (September 14) in Yuen Long seized about 14 million suspected illicit cigarettes and about 900 000 electronic cigarettes suspected of containing nicotine with a total estimated market value of about \$45 million and a duty potential of about \$27 million. Three men suspected to be connected to the case were arrested.

During an anti-illicit cigarette operation conducted in Pat Heung, Yuen Long in the early hours today, Customs officers seized the batch of suspected illicit cigarettes and electronic cigarettes suspected of containing nicotine inside a metal hut and a lorry. Three men suspected to be connected to the case, aged between 24 and 36, were arrested and a lorry has been detained.

It is believed that a suspected illicit cigarette storehouse has been raided during the operation. Investigation is ongoing.

Together with the seizures in this case, Customs has so far this year seized over 292 million suspected illicit cigarettes, about 42 per cent more of last year's total in terms of seizure quantity.

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.

According to the Pharmacy and Poisons Ordinance, nicotine-containing electronic cigarette products are classified as pharmaceutical products requiring registration with the Pharmacy and Poisons Board of Hong Kong before they can be sold in Hong Kong. In addition, nicotine is a Part 1 poison which can only be sold at pharmacies under the supervision of a registered pharmacist. Illegal sale and possession of Part 1 poisons and unregistered pharmaceutical products are criminal offences. The maximum penalty for each offence is a fine of \$100,000 and two years' imprisonment.

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).

