

Hong Kong Customs seizes suspected illicit cigarettes (with photos)

Hong Kong Customs mounted an anti-illicit cigarette operation from November 20 to 21 and seized a total of about 1.9 million suspected illicit cigarettes with an estimated market value of about \$5.2 million and a duty potential of about \$3.7 million at Man Kam To Control Point and Chek Lap Kok.

On November 20, Customs officers intercepted an incoming lorry declared as containing assorted goods at Man Kam To Control Point. About 300 000 suspected illicit cigarettes were found in 26 carton boxes mix-loaded with other goods on the vehicle. The 59-year-old male driver was arrested. After follow-up investigation, Customs officers further seized about 100 000 suspected illicit cigarettes at a logistics site in Chek Lap Kok on the same day.

Then, on November 21, Customs officers intercepted an incoming lorry declared as containing furniture at Man Kam To Control Point. About 1.5 million suspected illicit cigarettes were found concealed in 62 mattresses mix-loaded with other goods on the vehicle. The 67-year-old male driver was arrested.

The two lorries involved in the cases were also detained for investigation. Investigations are ongoing.

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 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 the Customs 24-hour hotline 2545 6182, or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk).

