

Hong Kong Customs seizes suspected illicit cigarettes (with photos)

Hong Kong Customs seized a total of about 290 000 suspected illicit cigarettes with an estimated market value of about \$800,000 and a duty potential of about \$550,000 at Ngau Tau Kok and Shenzhen Bay Control Point on April 29 and May 2 respectively.

Customs officers conducted an anti-illicit cigarette operation in Ngau Tau Kok on April 29 and intercepted a light goods vehicle (LGV) suspected of distributing illicit cigarettes. About 80 000 suspected illicit cigarettes and a batch of suspected illicit cigarette promotion leaflets were seized on board the vehicle. Customs arrested the 31-year-old male driver and a 20-year-old man involved in the case. The LGV was also detained. The two arrested men were charged with contravening the Dutiable Commodities Ordinance (DCO) and will appear at Kwun Tong Magistrates' Courts on May 14.

In addition, Customs officers intercepted an incoming truck declared as carrying assorted goods at Shenzhen Bay Control Point on May 2. About 210 000 suspected illicit cigarettes were found concealed inside a batch of yoga ball packaging boxes placed inside 15 cartons mix-loaded with other goods on the truck. The 42-year-old male driver was then arrested and the truck was also detained. Investigation is 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 DCO, 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).



