

Hong Kong Customs seizes suspected illicit cigarettes worth \$34 million (with photo)

Hong Kong Customs yesterday (December 17) raided a suspected illicit cigarette storehouse in Kwun Tong and seized about 12 million suspected illicit cigarettes with an estimated market value of about \$34 million and a duty potential of about \$23 million. Together with the seizure in this case, Customs has so far this year seized over 204 million suspected illicit cigarettes, a figure that already exceeds the annual seizure amounts for each of the past two decades.

During an anti-illicit cigarette operation conducted in Kwun Tong yesterday, Customs officers seized the batch of suspected illicit cigarettes at a commercial and industrial building unit and the loading area of the building. Eleven men suspected to be in connection with the case, aged between 20 and 55, were arrested and a container suspected to be connected with the case was detained.

Customs believes that a suspected illicit cigarette storehouse has been raided. Further investigation will be conducted to trace the source and the flow of the illicit cigarettes.

Investigation is ongoing and the likelihood of further arrests is not ruled out.

Customs will continue to combat illicit cigarette activities at all fronts, including cross-boundary smuggling, storage and distribution as well as peddling.

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).

