

[Hong Kong Customs seizes suspected illicit cigarettes worth about \\$58 million \(with photo\)](#)

Hong Kong Customs yesterday (April 9) conducted an anti-illicit cigarette operation in Fo Tan and San Tin. About 21 million suspected illicit cigarettes with an estimated market value of about \$58 million and a duty potential of about \$40 million were seized.

Customs officers smashed a suspected illicit cigarette storehouse in Fo Tan yesterday afternoon and seized about 9.6 million suspected illicit cigarettes. Two men moving the carton boxes of illicit cigarettes were arrested and a lorry suspected to be connected with the case has been detained.

Customs officers also detected a suspected illicit cigarette smuggling case in San Tin in the evening on the same day. About 11 million suspected illicit cigarettes were seized in a 40-foot container inside a fenced land. Four men in the site were arrested.

During the operation, Customs officers arrested six men aged between 23 and 72.

Investigation is ongoing. Customs will continue to trace the source and the flow of the illicit cigarettes. The likelihood of further arrests is not ruled out.

Customs has so far this year seized about 120 million suspected illicit cigarettes, which has reached 60 per cent of last year's total seizure amount.

Customs will continue its risk assessment and intelligence analysis for interception at source as well as through its multi-pronged enforcement strategy targeting storage, distribution and peddling to combat illicit cigarette activities.

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

