

Hong Kong Customs seizes suspected illicit cigarettes worth about \$6.2 million

Hong Kong Customs yesterday (May 16) seized a total of about 2.25 million suspected illicit cigarettes with an estimated market value of about \$6.2 million and a duty potential of about \$4.3 million in Ping Che and Tsuen Wan.

In the first case, Customs officers conducted an anti-illicit cigarette operation in Ping Che yesterday afternoon and raided a suspected illicit cigarette storage on Ping Che Road. During the operation, Customs officers seized about 2.21 million suspected illicit cigarettes inside a metal hut and a light goods vehicle. A 39-year-old man suspected to be in connection with the case was arrested and the light goods vehicle involved has also been detained.

In the second case, Customs officers intercepted a private car in Lei Muk Shue Estate, Tsuen Wan, yesterday afternoon and seized about 40 000 suspected illicit cigarettes inside the car. During the interception, the driver attempted to resist and tried to escape by driving the vehicle to bump into a Customs vehicle. Customs officers at last successfully arrested a 34-year-old male driver and a 21-year-old man suspected to be in connection with the case. The private car involved has also been detained. Two Customs officers sustained minor injuries in the arrest action. They were fine after proper treatment and did not need to stay in hospital.

Investigations of the two above-mentioned cases are 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 will also continue to combat illicit cigarette activities on all fronts through intelligence analysis.

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).