

Hong Kong Customs seizes suspected rhino horns (with photo)

Hong Kong Customs today (February 14) seized about 40 kilograms of suspected rhino horns, a record high seizure of rhino horns detected from arriving air passengers, with an estimated market value of about \$8 million at Hong Kong International Airport.

Customs officers intercepted two male passengers, aged 28 and 33, at the airport this morning. The two men arrived in Hong Kong from Johannesburg, South Africa. They were planning to transit to Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, by air.

During Customs clearance, suspected rhino horns were found in their two check-in carton boxes. The two men were then arrested.

The cases were handed over to the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department for follow-up investigation.

To provide a stronger deterrent against the smuggling and illegal trading of endangered species, the penalties under the Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance have been increased drastically since May 1, 2018. Any person importing, exporting or possessing specimens of endangered species not in accordance with the Ordinance will be liable to a maximum fine of \$10 million and imprisonment for 10 years. The specimens will also be forfeited upon conviction.

On February 8, 2019, two defendants were sentenced for 16 months imprisonment in the District Court for smuggling about 24kg and 17kg of agarwood. It was the heaviest sentence handed down so far for illegal import of endangered species under the present Ordinance.

Customs and the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department reminded citizens not to illegally import or export any endangered species.

Members of the public may report any suspected smuggling activities to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk).

