

Hong Kong Customs smashes counterfeiting syndicate (with photos)

Hong Kong Customs yesterday (February 20) conducted a special operation codenamed "First Clap" and smashed a counterfeiting syndicate in Tung Choi Street, Mong Kok. Five fixed hawker pitches and five storage facilities of suspected counterfeit goods were raided. A total of about 5 000 suspected counterfeit goods including handbags, wallets and scarves with an estimated market value of about \$3 million were seized.

Customs earlier received information alleging the sale of counterfeit goods at fixed hawker pitches in Mong Kok. With the assistance of the trademark owner and after an in-depth investigation, Customs officers took enforcement action yesterday and raided five fixed hawker pitches and five storage facilities. The batch of suspected counterfeit goods, as well as three tablets for displaying photos of suspected counterfeit goods, were seized.

During the operation, three men and three women were arrested, including two syndicate heads and four members, aged from 16 to 48.

Investigation is ongoing.

The Divisional Commander (Intellectual Property General Investigation), Ms Peggy Tam, said at a press conference today (February 21) that Customs would continue to step up inspection and enforcement to combat the sale of counterfeit goods. She reminded consumers to procure goods at reputable shops and to check with the trademark owners or their authorised agents if the authenticity of a product is in doubt. She also reminded traders to be cautious and prudent in merchandising, since the sale of counterfeit goods is a serious crime and offenders are subject to criminal liability.

Under the Trade Descriptions Ordinance, any person who sells or possesses for sale any goods with a forged trademark commits an offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$500,000 and imprisonment for five years.

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

