

[Hong Kong Customs smashes suspected counterfeit medicine syndicate \(with photo\)](#)

Hong Kong Customs on June 23 mounted a special operation to combat the sale of counterfeit medicines and seized about 110 000 tablets and 1.5 litres of suspected counterfeit medicines. The total estimated market value of the seizure was about \$4 million.

Customs earlier received information alleging suspected counterfeit medicines were being sold at medicine companies. After an in-depth investigation, Customs discovered that a syndicate has been distributing and selling suspected counterfeit medicines. Customs officers then took enforcement action on June 23 and raided a storehouse operated by the syndicate inside a commercial building in Tsim Sha Tsui. About 110 000 tablets of suspected counterfeit medicines, including suspected controlled medicines, were seized. A 47-year-old male operator of the storehouse was arrested. At the same time, Customs officers also searched an office of the syndicate in the same building and seized a batch of documents. A 57-year-old male staff member and a 38-year-old female staff member were arrested.

On the same day, Customs raided three medicine companies in Cheung Sha Wan, Mong Kok and Kowloon City to combat the retail network of the syndicate. About 200 tablets and 1.5 litres of suspected counterfeit medicines were further seized. Six men, comprising four persons-in-charge and two salespersons, aged between 30 and 53, were arrested.

Investigation is ongoing. All the arrested persons have been released on bail pending further investigation.

Customs believes that the operation has successfully demolished a syndicate distributing and selling suspected counterfeit medicines. The department will continue to maintain stringent law enforcement and close contact with relevant trademark owners, government departments and organisations, as well as keep track of the market, with a view to combating counterfeit medicine activities.

Customs reminds traders to be cautious and prudent in merchandising since selling counterfeit medicine is a serious crime and offenders are liable to criminal sanctions. Consumers are also reminded to make purchases at reputable shops and to check with the trademark owners or their authorised agents if authenticity of a product is in doubt.

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.

Under the Pharmacy and Poisons Ordinance, any person who possesses any poison included in Part 1 of the Poisons List other than in accordance with provisions commits an offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$100,000 and imprisonment for two years.

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

