

Hong Kong Customs steps up enforcement action against smuggling activities making use of infants and young children (with photos)

Hong Kong Customs mounted a special operation from December 1 last year to yesterday (January 8) to step up enforcement action against smuggling activities making use of infants and young children.

During the operation period, Customs officers detected four cigarettes smuggling cases at Lo Wu Control Point and Lok Ma Chau Spur Line Control Point respectively. About 10 800 suspected duty-not-paid cigarettes with an estimated market value of about \$30,000 and a duty potential of about \$20,000 were seized.

It is believed that infants and young children were used as camouflage to carry out cross-boundary smuggling activities. The cigarettes were concealed inside baby trolleys or children schoolbags in an attempt to evade Customs detection. The infants and young children being used in the cases are aged from four months to eight years old.

Three women and one man, aged between 31 and 44, were arrested in the operation. All of them are the accompanying parents of the abovementioned infants and young children.

Under the Dutiable Commodities Ordinance, anyone involved in dealing with, possession of, selling or buying illicit cigarettes commits an offence. Smuggling other dutiable commodities is also a serious offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$1 million and imprisonment to 2 years.

Customs reminds parents and guardians that they should not use infants or young children as cover for criminal activities. They are also urged to stay alert to prevent criminals from using their infants and young children for smuggling purposes. Members of the public should not take risks in the hope that they may not be caught.

Customs has all along been very concerned about cross-boundary smuggling activities making use of infants and young children. The department will continue to step up inspections on passengers travelling with infants and young children, and enhance publicity and public education at control points.

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).

