

Hong Kong Customs steps up enforcement action at boundary control points during Christmas and New Year holidays (with photos)

The Customs and Excise Department (C&ED) mounted an operation during the Christmas and New Year holidays at the airport, seaport, land boundary and railway control points to combat smuggling and other illegal activities through passenger and cargo channels.

Starting on December 15, 2018, and concluding on January 2, 2019, the operation ended up with the detection of 232 cases, resulting in the arrest of 147 persons and the seizure of items with an estimated value of about \$65 million.

On the anti-narcotics front, 62 dangerous drug cases were detected, resulting in the seizure of about 62 kilograms of suspected dangerous drugs with an estimated market value of over \$34 million. Twenty-three persons suspected of trafficking in dangerous drugs were arrested. Most of the seizures were cocaine, cannabis and gamma-butyrolactone, seized mainly from inbound air parcels and air passengers.

Customs officers also detected 26 cases of suspected smuggling of endangered species items including agarwood, pangolin scales, controlled cactuses and controlled American ginseng. Fifteen persons were arrested and the estimated seizure value is about \$2.02 million.

Infringing products with an estimated value of about \$3.6 million were also seized, including counterfeit watches, electronic products, clothing, shoes and socks.

In the operation, Customs officers also seized more than 1.08 million suspected illicit cigarettes. The estimated market value of the seizures is about \$2.94 million and with duty potential of about \$2.07 million. Seven persons were arrested.

Meanwhile, 814 inbound passengers were found to have failed to make a declaration to Customs officers for carrying tobacco and liquor exceeding exempted quantities, breaching the Dutiable Commodities Ordinance. Thirty persons were prosecuted and 784 others were fined.

With the imminent arrival of the Lunar New Year, the C&ED will continue to step up enforcement action against smuggling activities.

Online customers are reminded not to make purchases of prohibited or controlled items. Any import or export of controlled items must be accompanied by a valid licence or permit issued by the relevant authorities.

For details on import and export controls, they can visit the C&ED's website at www.customs.gov.hk.

"Smuggling is a serious offence and the maximum penalty upon conviction of trafficking in a dangerous drug is life imprisonment," a spokesman for the C&ED stressed.

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

