

[Hong Kong Customs steps up enforcement to combat illicit cigarettes activities before Lunar New Year \(with photo\)](#)

Hong Kong Customs conducted a special operation to combat illicit cigarettes activities on January 7 and 15. During the operation, Customs seized a total of about 31 million suspected illicit cigarettes with an estimated market value of about \$86 million and a duty potential of about \$59 million. A man was arrested.

Customs officers first intercepted a container truck in Ping Che, Fanling, in the afternoon of January 7 and seized about 10 million suspected illicit cigarettes inside a 40-foot container. A 69-year-old man was arrested.

Customs officers later searched a 40-foot container at a metal hut in Ping Shan, Yuen Kong, in the afternoon of January 15 and seized about 10 million suspected illicit cigarettes. After a follow-up investigation, officers searched another 40-foot container at a logistics site in Tsing Yi and further seized about 11 million suspected illicit cigarettes.

During the operation, Customs detained a container truck and three containers suspected to be connected to the case.

Investigations of the above-mentioned two cases are ongoing. Customs will continue to trace the source and flow of the illicit cigarettes. The likelihood of further arrests is not ruled out.

With the Lunar New Year around the corner, Customs will continue to step up enforcement to vigorously combat illicit cigarette activities through risk assessment, intelligence analysis and interception at source before and during the holiday.

Smuggling is a serious offence. Under the Import and Export Ordinance, any person found guilty of importing or exporting unmanifested cargo is liable to a maximum fine of \$2 million and imprisonment for seven years.

Under the Dutiable Commodities Ordinance, anyone involved in dealing with, possession of, selling or buying illicit cigarettes commits an offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$1 million and imprisonment for two years.

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

