

Hong Kong Customs to combat illicit cigarette activities on all fronts in support of Quit in June campaign

Hong Kong Customs will strengthen enforcement against illicit cigarettes in June, in support of the Quit in June campaign launched by the Department of Health, by taking territory-wide comprehensive enforcement action to combat illicit cigarette activities on all fronts, including cross-boundary smuggling, storage, distribution, buying and selling of illicit cigarettes, especially illicit cigarette activities in the public housing estates.

Customs has all along been making use of risk assessment and intelligence analysis for interception at source to combat smuggling of illicit cigarettes. A multi-pronged enforcement strategy targeting storage, distribution and peddling has also been adopted to combat illicit cigarette activities. Last year, Customs seized a total of about 427 million illicit cigarettes, almost a twofold increase compared to the 250 million illicit cigarettes seized in 2020. The figure was also the highest annual seizure amount in the past two decades. As for January to May this year, Customs has seized about 140 million illicit cigarettes so far.

With the fifth wave of the epidemic in Hong Kong having been brought under control gradually while the logistics and transportation industries have successively resumed normal operation, Customs believes that illicit cigarette syndicates will take the opportunity to become active in the illicit cigarette market again.

Customs reminds members of the public that it is an offence to buy or sell illicit cigarettes. They are urged not to break the law. 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.

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).