

Joint operation by Hong Kong Customs and Department of Health to combat illegal sale of nicotine-containing oil for electronic cigarettes (with photo)

â€‹Hong Kong Customs and the Department of Health (DH) yesterday (April 28) conducted a joint operation codenamed "Whirlwind" in Wan Chai, Kwun Tong, Mong Kok, Sham Shui Po, Tsuen Wan and Yuen Long to combat illegal sale of nicotine-containing oil for electronic cigarettes and seized about 50 000 pieces of suspected nicotine-containing oil for electronic cigarettes with an estimated market value of about 2.38 million.

Customs earlier received information alleging that some retail shops of alternative smoking products are suspected to be engaged in illegal activities. Investigation revealed that some retail shops using the sale of uncontrolled products such as heating devices and accessories of electronic cigarettes as a camouflage, so they could sell nicotine-containing oil for electronic cigarettes surreptitiously.

Customs and the DH then conducted a joint operation yesterday and raided various retail shops of alternative smoking products in Wan Chai, Kwun Tong, Mong Kok, Sham Shui Po, Tsuen Wan and Yuen Long. As a result, the batch of suspected nicotine-containing oil for electronic cigarettes was seized from 15 shops.

During the operation, Customs officers arrested ten men and ten women, aged between 20 and 41, including shop proprietors and salespersons.

Investigations by Customs and the DH are ongoing. The suspected nicotine-containing oil for electronic cigarettes seized will be sent to the Government Laboratory for examination.

According to the Pharmacy and Poisons Ordinance, nicotine-containing electronic cigarette products are classified as pharmaceutical products requiring registration with the Pharmacy and Poisons Board of Hong Kong before they can be sold in Hong Kong. In addition, nicotine is a Part 1 poison which can only be sold at pharmacies under the supervision of a registered pharmacist. Illegal sale and possession of Part 1 poisons and unregistered pharmaceutical products are criminal offences. The maximum penalty for each offence is a fine of \$100,000 and two years' imprisonment.

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

Members of the public may also call the DH at 2572 2068 for further enquiries relating to pharmaceutical products and medicines.

