

Joint operation makes two-year record seizure of suspected smuggled hairy crabs (with photo)

The Customs and Excise Department (C&ED) and the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) made the biggest seizure of 1 053 suspected smuggled hairy crabs since 2018 of its kind with an estimated market value of about \$21 000 in a joint operation conducted at Lok Ma Chau Control Point yesterday (October 6).

Two major seizures were made in the past five days under the same joint operation. In the last seizure which occurred on October 2, a total of 446 with an estimated market value of about \$9 000 in the same control point were seized.

Almost 1 500 smuggled hairy crabs with a market value of \$30 000 were seized under the joint operation in five-day time.

In the case occurred yesterday, customs officers intercepted an incoming private car at Lok Ma Chau Control Point around the noon time. The 1053 hairy crabs were found in 13 baskets and three bags inside the car.

The 42-year-old male passenger was arrested and will appear at Fanling Magistrates' Courts tomorrow (October 8).

The C&ED reminds members of the public that smuggling is a serious offence. Under the Import and Export Ordinance (Cap 60), any person found guilty of importing or exporting unmanifested cargo is liable to a maximum fine of \$2 million and imprisonment for seven years.

The FEHD said that according to the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance (Cap 132), all food available for sale in Hong Kong, locally produced or imported, should be fit for human consumption. An offender is subject to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and imprisonment for six months upon conviction. Besides, under the Food Safety Ordinance (Cap 612), any person who, without reasonable excuse, does not register but carries on a food importation or distribution business commits an offence and is liable to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and imprisonment for six months.

The C&ED and the FEHD will keep up their close co-operation and intelligence exchanges with each other while joint operations against illegal food imports will also continue.

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

