

Person-in-charge of counterfeit medicine syndicate jailed (with photos)

A person-in-charge of a counterfeit medicine syndicate was sentenced to 30 months' imprisonment today (November 2) by the Tsuen Wan Magistrates' Courts after being convicted of possessing for trade counterfeit medicines and possessing controlled medicines, in contravention of the Trade Descriptions Ordinance and the Pharmacy and Poisons Ordinance respectively.

Hong Kong Customs mounted a special operation codenamed "Sniper" in December 2019 and smashed a packing-cum-storage centre in Chai Wan operated by the counterfeit medicine syndicate. A 46-year-old male person-in-charge was arrested. The numbers of counterfeit medicines and controlled medicines involved in the case were about 18 000 bottles and about 1.9 million tablets, with a total estimated market value of about \$10.7 million.

Customs welcomes the sentence. The custodial sentence has imposed a deterrent effect and reflects the seriousness of the offence. A clear warning has also been delivered to unscrupulous practitioners.

Customs will continue to take stringent law enforcement action and maintain close contact with relevant trademark owners, government departments and organisations, as well as keep track of the market, with a view to combatting counterfeit medicine activities.

Customs reminds traders that selling counterfeit medicine is a serious crime and offenders face criminal liability. Consumers are also reminded to purchase goods at reputable shops and to check with the trademark owners or authorised agents if authenticity of a product is in doubt.

Under the Trade Descriptions Ordinance, any person who sells or possesses for sale any goods with a forged trademark commits an offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$500,000 and imprisonment for five years.

Under the Pharmacy and Poisons Ordinance, any person who possesses any poison included in Part 1 of the Poisons List other than in accordance with provisions commits an offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$100,000 and imprisonment for two years.

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

