

Hong Kong Customs raids two suspected illicit cigarette storage centres (with photos)

Hong Kong Customs yesterday (December 13) conducted anti-illicit cigarette operations in Tsim Sha Tsui and Yuen Long, and successfully cracked down on two suspected illicit cigarette storage centres. A total of about 2.75 million suspected illicit cigarettes with a total estimated market value of about \$10 million and a duty potential of about \$6.9 million were seized.

In the first case, Customs officers raided a unit of a sub-divided flat on Nathan Road, Tsim Sha Tsui, yesterday afternoon and seized about 650 000 suspected illicit cigarettes therein. A 60-year-old women who claimed to be unemployed and suspected to be connected with the case was arrested.

In the second case, Customs officers on the same afternoon further seized about 2.1 million suspected illicit cigarettes inside a metal hut on Kam Po Road in Yuen Long, successfully shutting down another suspected illicit cigarette storage centre. Two 36-year-old men, both claiming to be workers, suspected to be connected with the case were arrested.

The three arrested persons have been charged with "dealing with goods to which the Dutiable Commodities Ordinance applies", and the two cases will be brought up at the Kowloon City Magistrates' Courts on December 20 and the Tuen Mun Magistrates' Courts tomorrow (December 15) respectively.

With the Christmas and New Year holidays approaching, Customs will continue its risk assessment and intelligence analysis for interception at source as well as through its multipronged enforcement strategy targeting storage, distribution and peddling to spare no effort in combating illicit cigarette activities.

Customs reminds members of the public that it is an offence to buy or sell illicit cigarettes. 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) or online form (eform.cefs.gov.hk/form/ced002/).



[Speech by SCST at opening ceremony of Hong Kong Science Museum's special exhibition "Science Fiction: Voyage to the Edge of Imagination" \(English only\)](#)

â€‹Following is the speech by the Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Mr Kevin Yeung, at the opening ceremony of the Hong Kong Science Museum's special exhibition "Science Fiction: Voyage to the Edge of Imagination" today (December 14):

Dr Knights (Deputy Director of the Science Museum, London, Dr Julia Knights), Professor Ching (Chairman of Science Sub-committee, Museum Advisory Committee, Professor Ching Pak-chung), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good evening. Welcome to the opening ceremony of the special exhibition, "Science Fiction: Voyage to the Edge of Imagination".

Just a fortnight ago, I was delighted to have officiated at the opening ceremony of the China Manned Space Exhibition, which showcased our country's remarkable breakthroughs and achievements in the pursuit of space exploration. The 30-year-long pursuit was inspired by human imagination and dream of the outer space.

Also driven by imagination, science fiction can play a part in boosting scientific and technological innovations as well. In recent years, Chinese science fiction has gained wider popularity and recognition across the globe. The World Science Fiction Convention, a prestigious and long-standing sci-fi

event, was held in Chengdu, China, this year, attracting over 20 000 participants.

Science fictions help nurture curiosity, ignite one's imagination, and inspire future generations to push the boundaries of knowledge and understanding. The growing popularity of science fiction will spark young people's interest in STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts and Mathematics) and inspire them to pursue careers in science and technology, thereby contributing to our country's strategic development and the growth of Hong Kong's innovation and technology ecosystem.

This extraordinary exhibition will immerse visitors in interactive science fiction narratives and will also uncover fascinating connections between significant scientific innovations and celebrated science fiction works. The exhibits will interweave science, arts, movies and literature, appealing not just to science fans but also movie buffs as well as art and literature lovers.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my heartfelt thanks to the Science Museum Group for bringing this fantastic and inspiring exhibition to Hong Kong, following the success of the exhibition "Robots: The 500-year Quest to Make Machines Human" in 2020. I look forward to further collaboration in the years to come, and I wish this exhibition every success. Thank you very much.

Joint Press Conference by Hong Kong Customs and AFCD on combating endangered species smuggling activities and amendments to schedules of Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance (Cap. 586) will take effect tomorrow

Hong Kong Customs and the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) today (December 14) held a joint press conference on law enforcement results in combating endangered species smuggling activities and amendments to the schedules of Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance (Cap. 586) which will take effect shortly.

In the first 11 months of this year, Customs detected 379 smuggling

cases involving endangered species in which 263 persons were arrested and seizures with an estimated market value of about \$80 million were made.

"The overall number of cases as of November this year has increased by nearly 30 per cent compared to the entire previous year, indicating a significant upward trend in the relevant figures," the Divisional Commander (Air Passenger) of the Airport Command of Customs, Mr Lau Leung-chi, said in reporting cases of the illegal import of regulated endangered species at the joint press conference.

"There is a noticeable growth in cases of endangered species seized through passenger channels which surged from 150 cases throughout last year to 250 cases in the first 11 months of this year, representing a growth of 67 per cent. Most of these cases involved passengers bringing regulated endangered species into Hong Kong without a licence, including American ginseng, orchids, dendrobium, dried seahorses, and ivory products," he added.

"With the upcoming Christmas and Lunar New Year holidays, it is expected that many members of the public will travel abroad. Customs urges everyone to exercise caution and ensure that souvenirs or gifts brought back to Hong Kong do not involve regulated endangered species. If there are any doubts or uncertainties, they should refrain from purchasing and bringing them back to Hong Kong to avoid contravention of relevant laws."

In addition, Customs also reminded the public that smuggling is a serious offense. 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.

Amendments to the schedules of the Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance (Cap. 586) will come into effect tomorrow (December 15). The Endangered Species Protection Officer of the AFCD, Dr Jenny Lau, introduced the amendments at the joint press conference and said, "The amendments mainly reflect the addition, removal and other changes of species listed in the Appendices to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, and involves a number of species of freshwater turtles, river stingrays, sharks, sea cucumbers, wood, etc. Under the Ordinance, except with exemptions or otherwise specified, the import, export, re-export, introduction from the sea or possession of the controlled species, including their parts and derivatives, are subject to licensing control."

The AFCD reminded members of the public that it is illegal for any person to import, export or possess any endangered species without a required licence. Offenders are liable to a maximum penalty of a \$10 million fine and imprisonment for 10 years upon conviction. The specimens will also be forfeited. For licensing requirements for the species listed on different appendices, members of the public may visit the website: www.cites.hk. For enquiries, please contact the AFCD through email (hk_cites@afcd.gov.hk) or call 1823.

Members of the public may report any suspected smuggling activities to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk) or online form (eform.cefs.gov.hk/form/ced002).

Provisional statistics on index of industrial production and producer price index for industrial sector for third quarter of 2023

According to the provisional results of a survey released today (December 14) by the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD), the index of industrial production for manufacturing industries as a whole increased by 4.4% in the third quarter of 2023 compared with a year earlier, following a year-on-year increase of 2.7% in the second quarter of 2023. The corresponding producer price index increased by 3.0% in the third quarter of 2023 compared with a year earlier, as against a year-on-year decrease of 0.2% in the second quarter of 2023.

The index of industrial production for sewerage, waste management and remediation activities increased by 2.5% in the third quarter of 2023 compared with a year earlier, following a year-on-year increase of 2.2% in the second quarter of 2023. The corresponding producer price index increased by 2.3% in the third quarter of 2023 compared with a year earlier, as against a year-on-year decrease of 1.0% in the second quarter of 2023.

Indices of industrial production reflect changes in the volume of local industrial output after discounting the effect of price changes. The price changes are measured by the producer price indices compiled from data on producer prices of selected industrial goods/services collected in the same survey.

Comparing the industrial production in respect of major manufacturing industries in the third quarter of 2023 with that a year earlier, increases in output volume were recorded for all major manufacturing industries. The food, beverages and tobacco industry had the largest increase in output volume (+4.0%), followed by the textiles and wearing apparel industry (+1.0%), the paper products, printing and reproduction of recorded media industry (+0.9%), and the metal, computer, electronic and optical products, machinery and equipment industry (+0.7%).

On a seasonally adjusted basis, the index of industrial production for manufacturing industries as a whole decreased by 1.0% in the third quarter of

2023 compared with the second quarter of 2023.

Producer price indices reflect changes in the prices of local output. They measure changes in the actual prices (net of any discounts or rebates allowed to buyers, plus any surcharges) received by producers for their output. Transportation and other incidental charges are not included.

Comparing the third quarter of 2023 with a year earlier, increases in producer prices were recorded mainly in the metal, computer, electronic and optical products, machinery and equipment industry (+3.9%), the paper products, printing and reproduction of recorded media industry (+3.4%), and the food, beverages and tobacco industry (+1.8%). On the other hand, a decrease in producer price was recorded in the textiles and wearing apparel industry (-0.4%).

Table 1 shows the year-on-year percentage changes in the indices of industrial production by selected industry grouping. Table 2 shows the year-on-year percentage changes in the producer price indices for the industrial sector by selected industry grouping.

The revised figures on indices of industrial production and producer price indices for the industrial sector for the third quarter of 2023 will be released at the website of the C&SD (www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/page_8000.html) and relevant publications of the Department starting from January 18, 2024.

Users can browse and download the reports "Quarterly Index of Industrial Production, 3rd Quarter 2023" (www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/EIndexbySubject.html?pcode=B1070002&scode=310) and "Quarterly Producer Price Index for Industrial Sector, 3rd Quarter 2023" (www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/EIndexbySubject.html?pcode=B1070003&scode=280) at the website of the C&SD.

For enquiries about indices of industrial production and producer price indices, please contact the Industrial Production Statistics Section of the C&SD (Tel.: 3903 7247; email: ind-production@censtatd.gov.hk).

[Hong Kong's Gross National Income and external primary income flows for the third quarter of 2023](#)

The Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) released today (December 14) the preliminary statistics on Hong Kong's Gross National Income (GNI) and related figures for the third quarter of 2023.

Hong Kong's GNI, which denotes the total income earned by Hong Kong residents from engaging in various economic activities, increased by 9.6% in the third quarter of 2023 over a year earlier to \$860.5 billion at current market prices. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP), estimated at \$767.1 billion at current market prices in the same quarter, recorded a 6.4% increase over a year earlier. The value of GNI was larger than GDP by \$93.4 billion in the third quarter of 2023, which was equivalent to 12.2% of GDP in that quarter, mainly attributable to a net inflow of investment income.

After netting out the effect of price changes over the same period, Hong Kong's GNI increased by 5.4% in real terms in the third quarter of 2023 over a year earlier. The corresponding GDP in the same quarter increased by 4.1% in real terms.

Hong Kong's total inflow of primary income, which mainly comprises investment income, estimated at \$554.1 billion in the third quarter of 2023 and equivalent to 72.2% of GDP in that quarter, recorded a significant increase of 11.7% over a year earlier. Meanwhile, total primary income outflow, estimated at \$460.6 billion in the third quarter of 2023 and equivalent to 60.0% of GDP in that quarter, also increased by 6.6% over a year earlier.

As for the major components of investment income inflow, direct investment income (DII) decreased by 2.6% from a year earlier, mainly due to the decrease in earnings of some prominent local enterprises from their direct investment abroad. Portfolio investment income (PII) recorded a significant increase of 14.6% over a year earlier, mainly attributable to the increase in interest income received by resident investors from the holdings of non-resident debt securities and the increase in dividend income received by resident investors from their holdings of non-resident equity securities.

Regarding the major components of investment income outflow, DII decreased by 1.7% from a year earlier, mainly due to the decrease in earnings of some prominent multinational enterprises from their direct investment in Hong Kong. PII increased by 6.8%, mainly attributable to the increase in dividend payout to non-resident investors from their holdings of resident equity securities.

Analysed by country/territory, the mainland of China continued to be the largest source of Hong Kong's total primary income inflow in the third quarter of 2023, accounting for 47.9%. This was followed by the British Virgin Islands (BVI), with a share of 13.8%. Regarding total primary income outflow, the mainland of China and the BVI remained the most important destinations in the third quarter of 2023, accounting for 28.5% and 23.4% respectively.

Further Information

GDP and GNI are closely related indicators for measuring economic performance. GDP is a measure of the total value of production of all

resident producing units of an economy. GNI denotes the total income earned by residents of an economy from engaging in various economic activities, irrespective of whether the economic activities are carried out within the economic territory of the economy or outside.

Figures of GNI and primary income flows analysed by income component from the fourth quarter of 2021 to the third quarter of 2023 are presented in Table A, while selected major country/territory breakdowns of primary income inflow and outflow for the same quarters are presented in Tables B(1) and B(2) respectively.

Statistics on GDP and GNI from 2021 onwards and primary income flows for 2023 are subject to revision when more data are incorporated. In the light of the latest information available, annual and quarterly figures of GNI and external primary income flows for 2022 have been revised, such that the corresponding figures presented in Tables A and B are revised figures.

More detailed statistics are given in the report "Gross National Income and External Primary Income Flows, Third Quarter 2023". Users can browse and download this publication at the website of the C&SD (www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/EIndexbySubject.html?pcode=B1040005&scode=250).

For enquiries about GNI and related statistics, please contact the Balance of Payments Branch (2) of the C&SD (Tel: 3903 7054 or email: gni@censtatd.gov.hk).