

Customs News

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Message from Commissioner Timothy Tong

Dear Colleagues,

With the festive season approaching, I write to wish you all a Merry Christmas and a prosperous 2004.

Since taking up the Commissioner post on 29 September 2003, I have visited most of our major Formations, talked to many colleagues, and learnt a lot about the daily operations of the Department. I have also had open and frank discussions with members of Staff Associations on all matters of our common concern.

Dear colleagues, your professionalism at work and your enthusiasm to serve are highly impressive. A positive working attitude is particularly important as the demand for our services is formidable, but the resources at our disposal limited. With the implementation of the Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA) in January 2004, and the opening of new control points further down the road, there are many challenges ahead. New assignments aside, we have performance pledges to keep and efficiency saving targets to meet.

With the ingenuity of service members, and with the Department's time-tested dedication to work, I have no doubt that we will rise to the challenges. I am fully confident that we will continue to ably perform our dual roles of law enforcement and trade facilitation, demonstrating "Commitment and Excellence" as we the Hong Kong Customs march on.

Let me take this opportunity to tell you that the Management has just confirmed our 2004/05 envelope of resources with the Policy Bureaux. Although our allocation next year will be lesser than that of the current financial year, and that we ought to be extremely prudent in our spendings, do be assured that the Department will still be able to shoulder the costs of staff promotions. The Management is now actively liaising with our Policy Bureaux and Civil Service Bureau for their consent to conduct promotion exercises at Inspectorate and Customs Officers grades in the coming year to effect the promotion of deserved staff. Indeed some of our officers have most justifiably earned their right to advance, and advance they should.

Furthermore, you are aware that our disciplined staff establishment is over-stretched following a series of savings exercises over the past years. This took place against a background of rapid growth in passenger and freight traffic at control points, and whilst we expanded our enforcement actions against smuggling, IPR infringement, illicit cigarette and illicit fuel sales. With major cross-boundary projects soon to come on stream, we have a definitive demand for additional manpower and an urgent need to start recruitment of Inspectors and Customs Officers. Together with the Deputy Commissioner and other Directorate staff, we are working hard to seek exemption from the recruitment freeze, and we will report progress to you.

As Christmas bells jingle, please note also the pleasant news that the Department has recently received donations amounting to one million Hong Kong dollars for our Customs and Excise Service Children's Education Trust Fund. This favourably reflects the support Customs have of the community, as the excellent services rendered by our officers are warmly appreciated.

Have a good time with your family and friends; and I wish every one of you good health, happiness and success in your career!

Yours faithfully,

Commissioner



S for S commends Customs on its work

The Secretary for Security, Mr Ambrose S K Lee, expressed his appreciation for the hard work of Customs officers and their professional commitment to law enforcement and trade facilitation when he visited the Department on October 30.

During his visit, Mr Lee was briefed by Commissioner Timothy Tong on the many functions and latest developments of the Department.

"I am impressed by Customs' achievements in curbing the problems of illicit cigarette, fuel, and piracy activities over the years," Mr Lee said, noting that there had been a drastic drop in the number of black spots for such activities.

"With the opening of more control points in the near future,

and the implementation of CEPA early next year, I can see many new challenges ahead for Customs officers, but I am confident that you will faithfully keep up your good work in serving the community," Mr Lee told Customs officers.

Mr Lee toured the Kwai Chung Customhouse where he saw the operation of the Ports and Maritime Command and the Special Task Force. He also watched demonstrations of the Mobile X-ray Vehicle Scanning System, and narcotics detector dogs and explosive detector dogs.

During the visit, Mr Lee also met with representatives of the staff associations to listen to their views on a number of issues.



The Secretary for Security, Mr Ambrose S K Lee, being briefed by the Head of the Special Task Force, Albert Chan (second from right), on how the Department raided pirated discs replicating workshops.

Information Unit

Commissioner visits CPC

Commissioner Timothy Tong paid two half-day visits to the Control Points Command (CPC) on October 13 and 17 respectively. Accompanied by Head of Control Points Command Ko Chi-lok, the Commissioner visited the CPC Headquarters and the four land-boundary control points.

During his visit, the Commissioner met with officers stationed at the various control points and saw for himself a number of new facilities like the Vehicle X-ray Inspection Building, Cargo Examination Complex, Customs kiosks and passenger clearance cubicles at Lok Ma Chau Control Point.

The Commissioner commended the CPC for its efforts in simplifying Customs clearance procedure for goods vehicles. He also asserted the contributions of the Department towards facilitation of people and cargo flows and the professionalism of CPC officers in executing Customs law-enforcement duties at the control points amidst the increasing demand for efficient Customs clearance service from the public.

Control Points Command



The Commissioner has a bird's eye view of the cross-boundary facilities at the Lok Ma Chau Control Point observation post.

Commissioner visits PMC

Commissioner Timothy Tong visited the Ports and Maritime Command (PMC) on October 20, 2003 to see for himself the work and operation of the Command in performing container and cargo examination duties.

Following a briefing session on the organisation and responsibilities of the PMC, the Commissioner visited the cargo examination compound at the Kwai Chung Customhouse. In order to enable the Commissioner to know more about the work of the frontline officers, a demonstration on the operation of the Mobile X-ray Vehicle Scanning System was conducted.

Ports and Maritime Command



Commissioner Timothy Tong with the Commanders of the PMC.

APEC SCCP Meeting held in Phuket

Assistant Commissioner Chow Kwong and Assistant Superintendent Leung Tak-yin attended the Second 2003 APEC Sub-Committee on Customs Procedures (SCCP) Meeting in Phuket, Thailand from August 13 to 16.

Forty-five delegates from 18 member economies participated in the meeting. Member economies had thorough discussions over various issues, such as implementation the APEC Trade Facilitation Principles and customs-related WTO agreements, promotion of the Customs-Business partnership, Common Data Elements and paperless trading.

Being the lead shepherd of the Collective Action Plan (CAP) on Customs-Business Partnership, Hong Kong Customs reported on the findings of the survey on members status in expanding their scope of business partnership programmes and the progress since the implementation of the CAP in the second half of 2001.

APEC Unit
Customs Liaison Bureau



Group photo of the Second 2003 APEC SCCP Meeting.

HK Customs attends WCO RCP Meeting

Senior Superintendent Lai Chun-kong and Senior Inspector Lai Sau-ieng of the Customs Liaison Bureau attended the 13th WCO Asia Pacific Regional Contact Points (RCP) Meeting in New Delhi, India between October 13 and 17, 2003.

The RCP Meeting is an annual meeting for contact points of WCO Asia Pacific Region members to exchange views on subjects of mutual concern. The Meeting was important as the RCP Meeting was held immediately before the coming biennial Regional Conference for Heads of Customs Administrations. Based on the ground work laid at this meeting, Customs Heads of the Region will further discuss and map out the Region's future work agenda in the Conference to be held in April 2004.

Security and Facilitation, Capacity Building and Regional Arrangements were the three main themes of the 13th RCP Meeting. In our capacity as the Activity Co-ordinator, Hong Kong Customs submitted progress reports on the two Regional Strategic Plan key activities concerning the implementation of regional enforcement programmes and promotion of Customs-Business partnership. We also reported on a regional survey conducted by us regarding the way forward for action plan arising from the 2002 Regional Enforcement Seminar in Chengdu and obtained endorsement of the Meeting on our two proposals.



WCO RCP Meeting delegates visiting the famous Taj Mahal.

WCO and APEC Division
Customs Liaison Bureau

CDIB officer attends anti-drug meeting in South Korea

Superintendent of the Customs Drug Investigation Bureau (CDIB), Daniel Cheung, participated in the 13th Anti-Drug Liaison Officials Meeting for International Cooperation (ADLOMICO) in South Korea between September 24 and 26. The ADLOMICO is an annual event of the country. It aims to group drug enforcement officers together for discussion of the trafficking trends, sharing drug intelligence and setting enforcement strategy. With the increase of co-operation between Hong Kong Customs and the Korean authorities, CDIB was invited for the first time to attend the ADLOMICO.

Drug Trafficking Situation in Hong Kong and Enforcement Strategy of Hong Kong Customs, and A Case Study on International Co-operation - to 138 participants from 16 countries and three international organisations.

"ADLOMICO offers an invaluable opportunity to enhance the co-operation at international level in preventing drug syndicates from exploiting the legal and operational loopholes," Superintendent Cheung stated.

In the meeting, Superintendent Cheung presented two topics -

Customs Drug Investigation Bureau

Exco Member Andrew Liao visits Customs

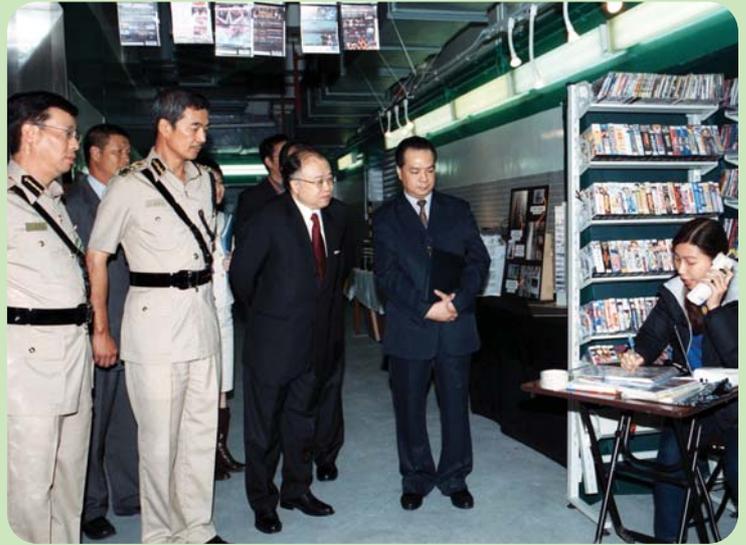
Executive Council Member, the Honourable Andrew Liao Cheung-sing visited the Customs on November 14 for a better understanding of the Customs enforcement actions against piracy and counterfeiting activities.

Accompanied by Commissioner Timothy Tong, Mr Liao met the Superintendent of Intellectual Property Investigation Bureau, Liu Cheung-shing, who told him that piracy and counterfeiting activities were under control.

During the visit, the Commissioner briefed Mr Liao on an extended anti-counterfeiting work programme being co-ordinated by the Customs. Working alongside the Intellectual Property Department, Travel Industry Council, Consumer Council, and other stakeholders including the industry and copyright holders, Customs would introduce the following initiatives:

- * setting up an "Alliance on Protection of Intellectual Property Rights" with copyright owners to enhance the effectiveness of Customs enforcement work;
- * stepping up enforcement action against counterfeiting activities through, among other things, enhanced intelligence and various incentive schemes;
- * strengthening publicity encouraging traders to pledge to sell genuine goods; and
- * organising seminar and roadshow to promote awareness and respect for intellectual property rights (IPR).

Under the Alliance, intellectual property copyright owners will step up their surveillance to ensure that shops selling goods bearing their trademarks are genuine. Any suspected counterfeit goods would be referred to Customs for follow-up investigations.



Executive Council Member The Honourable Andrew Liao (third from left) watching a demonstration of the operation of a pirated discs retail outlet. He is accompanied by Commissioner Timothy Tong and Assistant Commissioner William Chow.

The Commissioner told Mr Liao that the extended work programme aims to send a clear message to tourists and local shoppers that Hong Kong respects IPR and remains a shopping paradise for genuine goods.

Mr Liao said he would support the extended work programme. "I will be prepared to do what I could to help the Alliance on the Protection of Intellectual Property Rights to unite all relevant parties and engage them in fighting against counterfeiting activities." Mr Liao said. "I support the organisation of a territory-wide seminar, and more."

Information Unit

Deputy US Trade Representative visits HK



The Deputy US Trade Representative, Ambassador Josette Shiner (third from right), being briefed by the Head of the Ports and Maritime Command, Mr Chan Yiu-wah (second from right), on the cargo clearance procedures at the Kwai Chung Container Terminal. She is accompanied by the Deputy Commissioner Lawrence Wong.

The Deputy US Trade Representative, Ambassador Josette Shiner, led a delegation to visit the Hong Kong Customs on November 14, 2003.

Ambassador Shiner met Commissioner Timothy Tong and discussed issues of mutual concern.

Deputy Commissioner Lawrence Wong then accompanied her to visit the Kwai Chung Customhouse where she witnessed the daily operations of the Ports and Maritime Command (PMC).

Ambassador Shiner took the opportunity to view the Customs cargo examination procedures and learn about the implementation of the Container Security Initiative (CSI) Pilot Scheme.

She said that she had learnt from the US Customs that Hong Kong was a model CSI port, and she witnessed this during her visit to the PMC.

Regarding anti-piracy efforts, Ambassador Shiner was briefed about Customs' enforcement action against copyright piracy on different levels, including production, distribution and retailing.

Information Unit

Promotion of Assistant Commissioners



Acting Commissioner Lawrence Wong presenting promotion letter to Assistant Commissioner Chow Kwong.

On September 26, 2003, Acting Commissioner Lawrence Wong presented promotion letters to Chow Kwong and William Chow who were promoted to the rank of Assistant Commissioner.

On the same occasion, the Acting Commissioner presented an Appreciation Certificate to Senior Superintendent Lai Chun-kong to commend his distinguished service in liaison work while serving in the Customs Liaison Bureau during the period from July 2002 to September 2003.

Office of Service Administration



Acting Commissioner Lawrence Wong presenting promotion letter to Assistant Commissioner William Chow.



Acting Commissioner Lawrence Wong presenting Appreciation Certificate to Senior Superintendent Lai Chun-kong.

CE presents Medals/Certificate to outstanding Customs Officers

The Chief Executive, Mr Tung Chee Hwa, presented medals/certificate to outstanding Customs Officers at a commendation presentation ceremony at Government House on October 11, 2003.

Former Chief Superintendent Maggie Kwok was awarded the Customs and Excise Medal for Distinguished Service.

Senior Superintendents Ko Chi-lok, Leung Koon-wah and William Leung; Superintendent Lai Chun-kong; and Chief Customs Officers Wong Pui-fai and Kung Yiu-fai were awarded the Customs and Excise Medals for Meritorious Service.

Senior Customs Officer Chan Che-kwong was awarded the Chief Executive's Commendation for Community Service.

Office of Service Administration



The Commissioner and the awarded Customs officers pictured in the Government House (From left) Senior Customs Officer Chan Che-kwong; Chief Customs Officer Wong Pui-fai; Senior Superintendent William Leung; Commissioner Timothy Tong; Senior Superintendent Ko Chi-lok; Superintendent Lai Chun-kong; and Chief Customs Officer Kung Yiu-fai.

106 officers receive commendation

The second Commendation Presentation Ceremony of this year was held at the Senior Officers' Mess on September 18. A total of 106 officers were commended for their excellence at work. One officer was awarded the Commissioner's commendation; 91 officers were awarded the Assistant Commissioner's commendations; and 14 officers were awarded the Senior Principal Trade Controls Officer's commendation.

Meanwhile, Senior Inspector Chan Chi-wa was commended by the Customs Civil Secretary for the suggestion submitted to the 2003/04 Staff Suggestions Scheme – "Let's Join Hands to Cut Cost".



Acting Commissioner Lawrence Wong presenting the Commissioner's Commendation Certificate to Superintendent Albert Chan.

Office of Service Administration

Chow Kwong attends management programme in the UK

Assistant Commissioner Chow Kwong attended the Senior Executive Programme (SEP) organised by the Business School of the London University between September 28 and October 24, 2003.

The SEP is designed for executives who are at or near the top of their organisations and are directly concerned with leading their businesses. It embraces international participation from

diverse sectors throughout the world and offers valuable opportunities for participants to share and expand their international perspectives. The programme also assists senior executives in developing visions for driving change and preparing themselves for higher responsibilities.

Office of Training and Development

Ex-Service member cracked largest drug case in Australia

Having migrated to Australia in 1992, Ex-Service member Kelvin Kam joined the Australian Federal Police to carry on his mission as a crime-fighter. He is now working in the Australian Crime Commission. With the valuable experience and skills previously acquired, he shoulders the responsibilities of combating crimes in the Metropolitan Australia.

On September 4, 2003, Mr Kam participated in an operation jointly organised by the Australian Crime Commission, the Australian Customs Service, the Australian Federal Police and the Cambodian National Police. During the operation, enforcement officers successfully smashed an international

crime syndicate in Sydney and seized 750 kilograms of pseudoephedrine (main ingredient for manufacturing "ice"), with the retail price valued at a staggering HK\$7.6 billion. Four suspects were arrested.

This is the largest seizure of pseudoephedrine in Australia. We are honoured to have our former Service member participating in such a successful operation. We wish Mr Kam further successes in interdicting crimes.

Office of Service Administration

HK/US organise Cargo Profiling Seminar



The instructors of the Cargo Profiling Techniques and Tracking Seminar with the participants.

The Ports and Maritime Command and the US Navy jointly organised the Cargo Profiling Techniques and Tracking Seminar on July 31, 2003. Thirty-six officers from various major Formations and the US Container Security Initiative Team had participated in the course. The seminar aimed at enhancing participants' techniques in profiling high risk container shipments for strengthening maritime security.

In the seminar, the US Navy instructor, conferred on the subjects of maritime security, cargo data awareness,

transportation transaction analysis methodology, internet cargo tracking and alien smuggling. Discussions were held on target profiling, global maritime trading system and common smuggling routing and trends.

The seminar provided an excellent opportunity for participants to exchange views and experiences on cargo profiling. It also provided valuable reference on the establishment of our own cargo tracking system.

Ports and Maritime Command

Precursor Chemical Control Training Seminar



Acting Commissioner Lawrence Wong with some of the participants of the Department.

The US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), Hong Kong Country Office organised the Precursor Chemical Control Training Seminar in Hong Kong from August 25 to 29, 2003.

Nineteen officers from the Department attended the seminar. It was aimed at assisting frontline enforcement officers to better detect and counter the illicit diversion and use of chemicals for the manufacture of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances.

A four-member International Training Team of DEA delivered talks on topics covering international chemicals control, precursor chemicals diversion for amphetamine-type-stimulant production, chemical tracking operations, methods of diversion, chemical testing, chemical and internet investigations, and clandestine laboratory operations.

Acting Deputy Commissioner William Chow was invited to address the opening ceremony, while acting Senior Superintendent of the Customs Drug Investigation Bureau Daniel Cheung was invited to present graduation certificates to participants during the closing ceremony.

Controlled Chemicals Group
Customs Drug Investigation Bureau

APC implements QSAP

Have you ever been asked by your colleagues on the meaning of the red, green and blue colours shown in an X-ray machine or bothered by the lack of professional training for you or your officers on inspection equipment? The Airport Command (APC) provides an innovative solution - Quality Service Assurance Programme (QSAP).

QSAP is a systematic programme to ensure officers' competency in using inspection equipment with the aim to increase efficiency, enhance operational effectiveness and boost staff morale. With the assistance of the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department and overseas customs

counterparts, the APC has designed a tailor-made training package for the implementation of QSAP.

QSAP is implemented through a training loop system with four components - training, exercise, evaluation and review. Each cycle of training takes about nine months. Through this continuous training cycle, it is expected that officers' competency on the use of inspection equipment can be enhanced.

Airport Command

Customs Information Hotline

Whenever there is a significant seizure made by the Customs, there may be a team of unsung heroes behind the scene contributing to the success. They are our intelligence officers manning the Customs Information Hotline - 2545 6182.

Based on the principle of risk management, the Department adopts an innovative intelligence-led mode of operation. Information is collected, collated, and analysed to become intelligence, which is then disseminated to an appropriate action party. Sources of information include "tip-off", "self-developed", "exchanged" and "informer". Among these, the majority is collected by "tip-off" from the public through our Information Hotline.

Set up under the Administration and Support Unit of the Intelligence Bureau, the Information Hotline is manned by the Bureau's Duty Office that operates round-the-clock. Apart from being knowledgeable, experienced and skillful in soliciting relevant information from callers, hotline operators are also patient in handling impolite callers.

In order to ensure that our hotline operators keep pace with the Department's ongoing development, the Administration and Support Unit regularly runs training for them. This includes weekly briefings by Duty Inspectors and talks by colleagues from other Formations.

In October, Ports and Maritime Command (PMC) officers made a record seizure of two tonnes of ivory, and this was the



Duty Inspector listening to calls received through the hotline for quality assurance.

result of the information gathered by hotline operators. The information given by the caller at that time was incomplete. Had the hotline operators not gathered more vital information through their own effort, intelligence could not have been forwarded to PMC for action.

So, don't forget our unsung heroes who man the Information Hotline!

Administration and Support Unit
Intelligence Bureau

The mission of Financial Investigation Group

Hong Kong is an international city. It has a sound financial system which attracts numerous overseas investors. In order to maintain our status as an international financial centre, it is necessary to curb money laundering activities in the territory. The Customs and the Police are committed to combating against such illegal activities.

With the tightened control over crime proceeds, syndicates can no longer dispose their proceeds directly. In order to avoid the funds from being discovered and traced, the syndicates transfer the funds across various accounts among financial institutions. The process is known as money laundering. The most common known money laundering activity is the laundering of drug proceeds.

To prevent Hong Kong from being used as a place for money laundering, the Organized and Serious Crimes Ordinance and Drug Trafficking (Recovery of Proceeds) Ordinance were enacted. The Police and Customs set up the Joint Financial Intelligence Unit (JFIU) to exchange intelligence in financial investigation. Under the existing practice, suspicious transactions are reported by various financial institutions to the JFIU for investigation. The Financial Investigation Group (FIG) of the Customs Drug Investigation Bureau (CDIB) is responsible for conducting money laundering investigations.

Upon the effect of significant cases by the Drug Investigation Group, the FIG will conduct financial investigation on the arrestees. The drug proceeds are then being traced. In 2002, the FIG confiscated and restrained approximately \$1.75 million and \$83 million respectively.

The FIG also conducts investigations into the specified offences which are defined in the Organized and Serious Crimes Ordinance. The FIG maintains close co-operation with respective Formations in combating crimes and conducting joint operations.

In addition to financial investigation, the FIG also plays an important role in the fight against transnational crimes. In the past year, under the Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Ordinance, the FIG collected and produced evidence to overseas countries for prosecution purpose. In July this year, as a result of FIG's effort, part of the confiscated asset amounting to US\$2.9 million was shared with the US Government.

The FIG is also responsible for arresting and extraditing fugitives under the Fugitive Offenders Ordinance. In the recent six months, the FIG had successfully extradited four fugitives to the US Government. One of the fugitives was wanted for intellectual property right offences and the other three were wanted for drug related offences.

The FIG will closely liaise with international law enforcement agencies to fight against transnational crimes and to protect justice. Extradition of fugitives, financial investigation on money laundering and mutual legal assistance in criminal matters are always our tasks.

Senior Inspector Lee Chi-hong
Financial Investigation Group
Customs Drug Investigation Bureau

Customs organises Anti-piracy Campaign

In order to demonstrate the determination and dedication of the Department in combating copyright piracy, and the efforts of the Police in suppressing the sale of obscene VCDs, we had co-organised with the Sham Shui Po District Fight Crime Committee, Sham Shui Po District Office and Sham Shui Po District Police a campaign on August 23, 2003.

Acting Commissioner Lawrence Wong attended the campaign as officiating guest. The other guests included Director of Intellectual Property Mr Stephen Selby, Sham Shui Po District Police Commander Mr Peter Hunt and renowned singer Miss Priscilla Chan.

Speaking at the campaign, the Acting Commissioner encouraged members of the public to participate in and support for a concerted effort to combat piracy activities. He said, "We will certainly win the war against piracy if copyright owners, the industries, community organisations, the public and the enforcement agencies join hands to protect intellectual property rights (IPR)".

Intellectual Property Investigation Bureau

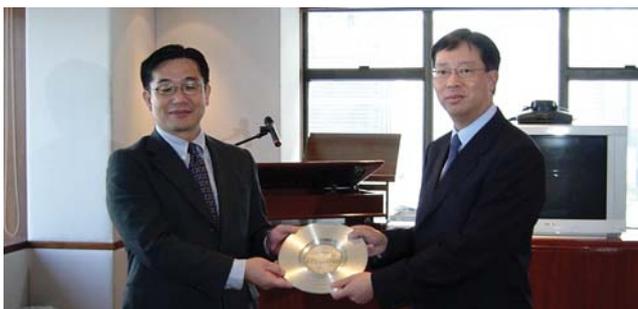


Acting Commissioner Lawrence Wong (front row centre) and other officiating guests at the Anti-piracy Campaign in Sham Shui Po.

A token of appreciation from SONY

Assistant Commissioner William Chow received a commendatory plaque from the SONY Corporation on August 28, 2003. The plaque was presented to Hong Kong Customs in recognition of the swift action and the professionalism of its officers in a series of successful raids on dealers and outlets selling counterfeit SONY Memory Sticks.

Intellectual Property Investigation Bureau



SONY Corporation's representative presenting a commemorative plaque to Assistant Commissioner William Chow.

Customs committed to combating illicit cigarettes activities

The Department is firmly committed to combating illicit cigarettes activities. The disbandment of the Anti-Illicit Cigarette Task Force in April 2003 does not affect the forcefulness of the Department in this battle. The Revenue and General Investigation Bureau (RGIB) and the Special Task Force (STF) have taken up the task.

The General Investigation and Support Division of the RGIB and the STF have shouldered the task in combating street level peddling of illicit cigarettes. The flexible deployment of existing manpower and pooling of resources have enabled more frequent and repeated raids and therefore enhanced the Department's capability in the suppression of the problem. Its effectiveness is demonstrated by the higher number of seizure made in the past six months. During the period from April to September 2003, our officers had seized more than 6.3 million sticks of illicit cigarettes during street level operations which represented a 22 per cent increase over the same period last year.

In order to achieve an effective deterrent effect, the enforcement actions are not only focused on peddlers.

Whenever situations warrant, raiding actions are carefully planned in the way that the buyers are also arrested together with the sellers at the moment when transactions are taken place. With the arrest of buyers and publicity through the media, messages are conveyed to the public to increase their awareness of the criminality of buying and selling illicit cigarettes.

The Department's determination to tackle the illicit cigarette problem is not confined to the street level. The Anti-Illicit-Cigarettes Investigation Division of RGIB is responsible for the investigation on the smuggling, distribution and storage of illicit cigarettes. Being supported by the streamlining and enhancement of intelligence collection and analysis, the Division conducts enforcement actions against syndicated illicit cigarettes smugglers.

To further strengthen our fight against illicit cigarettes activities, the Department also conduct liaison contacts and intelligence exchange with overseas and Mainland Customs authorities.

Revenue and General Investigation Bureau