

6 March 1988

## \$4 million cigarette consignment seized

By CHARLES LEWIS

CUSTOMS Investigation Bureau (CIB) officers have seized more than \$4 million worth of leading brand cigarettes that were being smuggled into China aboard a Chinese ship.

Senior Customs Inspector Lee Chun-fai said yesterday's contraband seizure was the biggest ever made at sea in recent years.

More than 1,000 cardboard boxes containing more than 50,000 cartons of cigarettes were discovered on board the vessel.

"The duty on the seized cigarettes consignment would have fetched more than \$1.5 million in Hongkong Government revenue," he said.

Inspector Lee said if the consignment had not been detected it would have fetched more than \$13 mil-

lion on the black market in China.

He said eight men were arrested.

"Hongkong customs, Marine Police and the Chinese customs authorities have been working very closely in the past weeks in an attempt to clamp down on local syndicates attempting to smuggle cigarettes into China."

The ship was intercepted by Marine Police on patrol near Tsing Yi Island shortly after midnight yesterday morning.

Meanwhile, Chinese customs at Lima Island are still questioning crew members of the 150-metre Honduran-registered freighter Shunan after the vessel was seized and its 12-man crew arrested 11 days ago on suspicion of smuggling a consignment of cigarettes worth \$1.6 million into China.