

26 smuggling speedboats seized in shipyard raids

By Joe Wong

TWENTY-SIX smuggling speedboats were surrendered to police by four shipyards in Sam Mun Tsai yesterday.

The speedboats, being built or undergoing maintenance, were estimated to be worth \$10 million.

Since the newly-passed Import and Export (Amendment) Ordinance came into effect last Friday, smuggling activities in the Tolo Channel have almost stopped.

Chief Superintendent, Basil Lim, who heads the Special Task Force on anti-smuggling, said it was the first time police had used the ordinance to seize speedboats.

A Customs and Excise Department spokesman said intelligence indi-

cated some shipyards in Sam Mun Tsai were building speedboats for smugglers.

He said one shipyard owner contacted them last week, before the bill became law, and agreed to surrender some boats.

One shipyard surrendered 17 boats.

The speedboats, many with bullet-resistant steel plates and windscreens, cost about \$500,000 each.

Under the new legislation, shipyard owners will be prosecuted if found building or repairing the vessels.

Mr Lim said there would be "a great impact" on smugglers because of the seizure.

"As there are no manufacturers making such speedboats in China, we believe the smugglers will have dif-

ficulties maintaining or repairing their vessels," he said.

The speedboats were handed over to the Customs and Excise Department and towed to the Marine North Division base in Mui Sha.

Some will be used by police and Customs while the rest will be destroyed.

Smugglers will have an even harder time after the Import and Export (Carriage of Articles) Bill is gazetted on Friday.

The bill is designed to combat smuggling of electrical goods and vehicles from Hongkong to China.

People contravening the regulations could be fined \$500,000 and jailed for two years.