

## Joint Press Release

### **TWO ATTEMPTS TO SMUGGLE CIGARETTES SMOKED OUT – THREE ARRESTED AND 53,500 PACKETS SEIZED**

Two attempts to smuggle cigarettes by air were foiled on 5 October 2006. Officers of Singapore Customs Special Investigations Branch seized 53,500 packets duty-unpaid cigarettes worth \$480,000 and arrested three men. The duty and GST payable totalled \$419,800.

A consignment of air cargo declared as three pallets of “toy race cars” was targeted for inspection by both Singapore Customs and the Immigration & Checkpoints Authority (ICA). On 5 October 2006 at about 9.50am, the lorry taking delivery of the three pallets arrived at the Air Cargo Complex Checkpoint for clearance. When one of the pallets was opened for inspection, the ICA officer noticed that the pallet contained brown boxes that resembled the shapes of cigarette cartons. Upon further inspection, her suspicions were confirmed – instead of toy cars, some cartons of duty-unpaid cigarettes were indeed found within. Singapore Customs was immediately alerted. On receipt of the alert from ICA officers, Singapore Customs trailed the lorry from the Air Cargo Complex Checkpoint to Jalan Buroh Distripark where it was intercepted. In total, officers found 3,350 cartons (or 33,500 packets) of duty-unpaid cigarettes worth more than \$300,000. The duty and GST totalled \$263,000. Two Singaporean men (both 38 years old) were arrested. Investigation is still on-going.

On the same day at about 1.00 pm, Singapore Customs officers mounted a 2<sup>nd</sup> operation at the Air Cargo Complex. The officers trailed a lorry carrying two pallets declared to contain documents from the Air Cargo Complex to a warehouse at Tai Seng Drive. At about 2.45 pm, a lorry arrived at the warehouse and collected the pallets. Officers trailed the lorry to Geylang Bahru. Packed in the pallets were 2,000 cartons (or 20,000 packets) of duty-unpaid cigarettes. The estimated market value of the cigarettes is \$180,000 and the duty and GST payable totalled \$156,800. A Singaporean man, aged 44 was arrested. Investigation is on-going.

Buying, selling, conveying, delivering, storing, keeping, having in possession or dealing with contraband cigarettes are serious offences under the Customs. Stiff penalties are imposed for such offences. On conviction by the court, offenders can be jailed for up to 2 years, as well as being fined. The vehicles used in the commission of the offence are also liable to forfeiture. Members of the public are reminded that selling and buying of contraband cigarettes are serious offences under the Customs Act. Singapore Customs will not hesitate to charge offenders in court. For a packet of duty-unpaid cigarettes, buyers stand to face a minimum fine of \$200 or prosecution in court.

Members of the public with information on smuggling activities or evasion of customs duty or GST can contact the Singapore Customs Intelligence Hotline on 1800-2330000 or email to [customs\\_intelligence@customs.gov.sg](mailto:customs_intelligence@customs.gov.sg)

As the country's first line of defence against terrorist and other security threats, ICA has a duty to ensure the security and safety of Singapore. We have tightened our security checks on passengers and vehicles at all checkpoints to prevent attempts to smuggle in undesirable persons, drugs, weapons, explosives and other contraband. Potential smugglers should think twice before trying to smuggle unlawful goods into Singapore.