



JOINT MEDIA RELEASE BY SINGAPORE CUSTOMS AND IMMIGRATION & CHECKPOINTS AUTHORITY

SINGAPORE CUSTOMS AND IMMIGRATION & CHECKPOINTS AUTHORITY JOINT OPERATION SEIZED 15,000 PACKETS CIGARETTES SMUGGLED ON TOUR BUS

On 15 November 2007, Singapore Customs (SC) and Immigration & Checkpoints Authority (ICA) conducted a joint operation targeting a Malaysian tour bus suspected to be smuggling contraband cigarettes into Singapore. Five men (four Singaporeans and one Malaysian), aged between 43 and 55 years were arrested. A total of 15,000 packets of duty-unpaid cigarettes worth about \$135,000 were seized. The duty and GST on the seized cigarettes are estimated to be over \$115,000.

2 Arising from investigation leads, SC and ICA officers targeted a Malaysian tour bus in the morning of 15 November 2007. The officers have suspected a tour bus has been conveying duty-unpaid cigarettes after dropping off passengers along Beach Rd area. The suspected bus was spotted at Golden Mile Complex where all its passengers dropped off. It was subsequently trailed to a heavy vehicle carpark at Tampines. When officers raided the bus, they caught three men in the midst of prising open the metal floorboards. A total of 15,000 packets of duty-unpaid cigarettes were uncovered from specially-constructed compartments under the metal floorboards. The three men and the Malaysian bus driver were arrested. Another Singaporean man who acted as the driver for the syndicate was also arrested. All five men will be charged in Court on 16 November 2007.

3 Singapore Customs warns that buying, selling, conveying, delivering, storing, keeping, having in possession or dealing with contraband cigarettes are serious offences under the Customs and GST Acts. Stiff penalties are imposed for such offences. On conviction by the Court, offenders can be jailed as well as fined. The vehicles used in the commission of the offence are also liable to forfeiture. The public are also advised against buying duty-unpaid cigarettes. For a packet of duty-unpaid cigarettes, buyers stand to face a minimum fine of \$500 or prosecution in Court.

4 As Singapore's first line of defence against terrorist threats, ICA has a duty to ensure the security and safety of Singapore. ICA has tightened security checks on passengers and vehicles at the checkpoints to prevent attempts to smuggle in undesirable persons, drugs, weapons, explosives and other contraband. The same methods of concealment used by contraband smugglers may be used by terrorists to smuggle arms and explosives to carry out attacks in Singapore. ICA would like to advise the public against smuggling unlawful goods into Singapore.

5 Members of the public with information on smuggling activities or evasion of Customs duty or GST should contact the Singapore Customs Intelligence Hotline at 1800-2330000 or email to customs_intelligence@customs.gov.sg.

**ISSUED BY: SINGAPORE CUSTOMS AND
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