



Singapore Customs Media Release

“CUSTOMS COMING TO CHECK MY LOCKER, HELP ME REMOVE THE ILLEGAL CIGARETTES...” – TWO FOREIGN WORKERS IN CAHOOTS CONVICTED FOR CIGARETTE OFFENCES

On 10 June 2009, two employment permit holders were convicted by the court for cigarette offences. Chen Zhihua (male, 26 years old) pleaded guilty to four charges under the Customs and GST Acts for having in possession illegal cigarettes. For this, he was sentenced to 12 months' jail. He also pleaded guilty to two other charges of abetting another man, Chen Qihan (24 years old), to help him hide the illegal cigarettes to prevent detection by Singapore Customs officers. For this offence, he was fined another \$5,000 or in default three weeks' jail. His accomplice, Chen Qihan, also pleaded guilty to two charges of abetting and was fined \$4,400 or in default 16 days' jail. The total duty and GST of the illegal cigarettes amounted to more than \$7,790.

2 Two parcels, arrived by post from China and declared to be containing rice, were referred to Singapore Customs for follow-up. Both parcels were addressed to one Chen Zhihua of Ang Mo Kio. Suspecting that the parcels contained cigarettes, Singapore Customs officers arranged for the delivery of the parcels to the addressee on 2 June 2009 at about 3.30 pm. When Chen Zhihua signed the receipt for the two parcels at his flat, the officers moved in, declared office and requested to inspect the content of parcels which he had just received. Upon opening the parcels, officers found 50 cartons or 500 packets of Double Happiness brand of cigarettes. The officers searched Chen's rented room and found another 465 packets of illegal cigarettes in his travel bag. Chen was arrested and the illegal cigarettes were seized. Investigations revealed that Chen had arranged for the cigarettes to be brought into Singapore for sale.

3 On 3 June 2009 at about 10.30 am, Singapore Customs officers visited Chen Zhihua's workplace to search the locker room. After searching through the lockers of the workers, officers found 39 packets of illegal cigarettes in the locker belonging to one Chen Qihan. On questioning, Chen Qihan admitted that the cigarettes belonged to his colleague Chen Zhihua. Chen Qihan said that he had received a telephone call from Chen Zhihua that morning. The latter informed that he had

been arrested by Singapore Customs and that officers would be making a trip to the company to search his locker. He asked Chen Qihan to help him remove the cigarettes from his locker. Chen Qihan then took the cigarettes from Chen Zhihua's locker and hid them in his own locker. Chen Qihan was arrested and the illegal cigarettes were seized.

4 From January to May 2009, Singapore Customs has prosecuted 80 foreigners with valid employment permits for their involvement in illegal cigarettes activities. In 2008, 190 foreign workers were charged for similar customs offences. Singapore Customs takes a serious view on foreigners committing customs offences. Not only will they be punished by the law, foreign workers also risk having their employment permits cancelled or being repatriated.

5 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. The vehicles used in the commission of such offence are also liable to be forfeited. The public are strongly advised not to buy duty-unpaid cigarettes. For possessing a packet of duty-unpaid cigarettes, buyers face a minimum fine of \$500 or prosecution in court.

6 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 (新加坡关税局) (KASTAM SINGAPURA)

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Parcels declared as rice turned out to contain duty-unpaid cigarettes



Singapore Customs officers found a travel bag stashed with illegal cigarettes when a search was conducted at Chen Zhihua's room



This is the bag with illegal cigarettes found in Chen Qihan's locker