



SINGAPORE CUSTOMS 新加坡关税局 **KASTAM SINGAPURA** சிங்கப்பூர் கங்கத்துறை

MEDIA RELEASE

23 January 2014

More caught for smuggling contraband cigarettes into Singapore using luxury cars

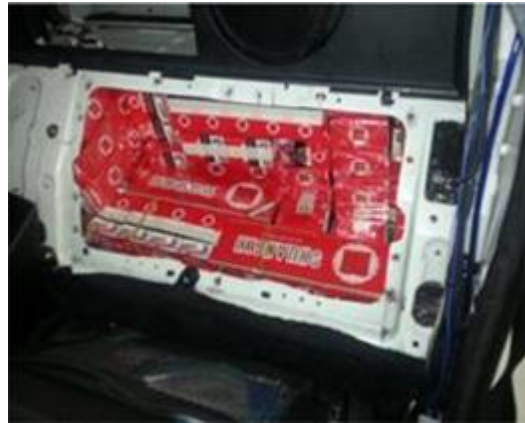
More offenders have been caught for smuggling contraband cigarettes into Singapore using luxury cars.

Last year, 15 offenders were caught for attempting to smuggle contraband cigarettes into Singapore in luxury cars, compared to just four offenders in 2012. Among those caught, 11 were sentenced to between three and 13 months' jail. Their vehicles were also forfeited. Court proceedings are still ongoing for the other four offenders.

These offenders concealed the contraband cigarettes in modified compartments of their luxury cars. They assumed that luxury vehicles would less likely be checked by enforcement officers at the checkpoints.



Duty-unpaid cigarettes hidden in the modified spare tyre compartment of a Mercedes-Benz car.



Duty-unpaid cigarettes hidden in the modified back seat of a Nissan Fairlady car.



Duty-unpaid cigarettes hidden in the engine compartment of a BMW car.

In 2013, a total of 2,642 cartons and four packets of duty-unpaid cigarettes valued at more than S\$250,000 were recovered from various compartments of luxury cars – including the seats, fuel tank, spare tyre and engine compartments – by enforcement officers. The duty and Goods and Services Tax (GST) evaded exceeded S\$208,000.

In one of these cases, a Singaporean man, Lim Wee Ming, was caught for attempting to smuggle 318 cartons of contraband cigarettes in a Singapore-registered Mercedes-Benz car at the Woodlands Checkpoint. The cigarettes were concealed in various modified compartments of the car. The duty and GST evaded amounted to more than S\$24,000.



Duty-unpaid cigarettes hidden in the modified fuel tank of the Mercedes-Benz car.

Investigations revealed that Lim had owed money to an illegal moneylender, who offered him the option of smuggling contraband cigarettes to settle his debt. Smuggling contraband cigarettes for the illegal moneylender, however, turned out to have far greater consequences for Lim. By breaking the law, Lim not only failed to clear his debt, he was also sentenced to 10 months' jail for his involvement in smuggling contraband cigarettes. His Mercedes-Benz car was also forfeited by the court.

Singapore Customs advisory

Buying, selling, conveying, delivering, storing, keeping, having in possession or dealing with duty-unpaid goods are serious offences under the Customs Act and the Goods and Services Tax (GST) Act. Offenders will be severely dealt with. They can be fined up to 40 times the amount of duty evaded, and/or jailed for up to six years.

The minimum court fine for first-time and repeat offenders of tobacco-related offences is \$2,000 and \$4,000 respectively. Repeat offenders who are caught with more than two kilogrammes of tobacco products will also face mandatory jail sentences. Vehicles used in the commission of such offences are also liable to be forfeited.

Members of the public with information on smuggling activities or evasion of Customs duty or GST can call the Singapore Customs hotline on 1800-2330000 or email customs_intelligence@customs.gov.sg.

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