



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

MEDIA RELEASE

27 February 2018

Repeat offender jailed 50 months and fined \$11m for dealing in duty-unpaid cigarettes

A repeat offender was sentenced on 26 February 2018 by the State Courts to 50 months' imprisonment and a fine of \$11 million for dealing in duty-unpaid cigarettes.

Tong Chye Heng, a 58-year-old Singaporean, pleaded guilty to five charges of storing, possessing and dealing in duty-unpaid cigarettes between 2 June to 7 December 2017. Another five charges were taken into account in the sentencing.

As Tong did not pay the court fine, he would serve another 31 months of default imprisonment, bringing the total imprisonment term to 81 months.

As a repeat offender, he is liable to an enhanced punishment under the Customs Act, which includes a mandatory jail term of up to six years, as well as a heavier fine of no less than 30 times the duty or Goods and Services Tax (GST) evaded.

Tong has been sentenced on four occasions since 1998 for committing customs offences.

On 15 March 2006, he was fined \$110,000 by the State Courts for importing 41 cartons of duty-unpaid cigarettes. As he did not pay the fine, he served the default jail term of 28 months.

Tong was caught again on 2 June 2017 for storing a total of 2,926 cartons and 370 packets and 43 sticks of duty-unpaid cigarettes in a farm in Sungei Tengah Road and in a commercial building in Soon Lee Street. He was charged in the State Courts on 3 June 2017.

While out on bail, he was nabbed in a carpark in Jurong West Street 41 during a Singapore Customs operation on 5 December 2017. The officers arrested Tong when he was transferring a box containing duty-unpaid cigarettes from his van to a car in the carpark. A total of 731 cartons and 190 packets of duty-unpaid cigarettes were seized from Tong's van.

Singapore Customs officers followed up with a raid on 7 December 2017 at an industrial building in Eunos Avenue 3. In a unit rented by Tong, the officers uncovered an additional 624 cartons and 469 packets of duty-unpaid cigarettes.

The total duty and GST evaded for the duty-unpaid cigarettes seized in the operations on 2 June 2017, and 5 and 7 December 2017 amounted to about \$377,150 and \$27,330 respectively.

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

Repeat offenders who are caught with more than two kilogrammes of tobacco products will also face mandatory imprisonment. Vehicles used in the commission of such offences are also liable to be forfeited.

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ANNEX



Tong was arrested on 2 June 2017 for storing a total of 2,926 cartons, 370 packets and 43 sticks of duty-unpaid cigarettes in a farm in Sungei Tengah Road (top row) and in a commercial building in Soon Lee Street.





Tong was arrested again on 5 December 2017, while he was out on bail, after Singapore Customs officers saw him transferring a box containing duty-unpaid cigarettes from his van to a car in a carpark in Jurong West Street 41.



Singapore Customs officers followed up with a raid on 7 December 2017 at an industrial building in Eunos Avenue 3 and uncovered an additional 624 cartons and 469 packets of duty-unpaid cigarettes from a unit rented by Tong.

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