

p.04 -

Travelling back or just visiting Singapore? Here's what you should know!





Travelling overseas for your holidays?

You can declare and pay taxes conveniently using the Customs@SG Web Application!









FEATURES

Singapore Customs recognised for contributing to businessfriendly initiatives



FEATURES

Reducing customs checks on goods traded within ASEAN



NEWS

Reaffirming partnerships with international counterparts

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EDITORS' NOTE

As we draw the curtain on 2023, we are heartened to end it on a sweet note by celebrating the Singapore Customs recipients of the Public Sector Transformation (PST) Awards who were recognised at the Ministry of Finance (MOF) Exchange in September 2023. At the organisational level, we received the Citizen Engagement Excellence Award for supporting the operations of the Hyundai Motor Group Innovation Centre Singapore. The latter also garnered Singapore Customs the Pro-Enterprise Transformation (Bronze) Award at the 2023 Pro-Enterprise Panel-Singapore Business Federation Awards in November 2023. Read more about these in pages 1 and 2.

Taking our trade facilitation efforts for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) bloc another step forward, Singapore Customs, along with the customs administrations of the other nine ASEAN Member States (AMS), signed a Mutual Recognition Arrangement (MRA) of Authorised Economic Operator programmes on 19 September 2023. The MRA offers potential benefits for businesses, including time and cost savings from expedited customs clearance and reduced documentation in processing their cargo across ASEAN. More background and details can be found on page 3.

For those visiting or simply travelling back home to Singapore, take heed of your legal obligations in declaring and paying for all dutiable and taxable goods you bring in. The consequences and penalties for not doing so are not worth it - as shown by the cases uncovered during our various 2023 joint enforcement operations with the Immigration & Checkpoints Authority (ICA) at the checkpoints. Check out pages 4 and 5.

As we excitedly prepare for the upcoming festive celebrations, let us remain vigilant against customs-related scams as you shop - including online. Check page 11 for tips on identifying common customs-related scams and red flags.

Happy 2024 and stay safe!

ISABEL CHIA AND REAVATHI SINNATHAMBY **Editors**



Singapore Customs recognised for contributing to business-friendly initiatives

Singapore Customs received the Citizen Engagement Excellence Award for MOF Family Group Level Awards and the Pro-Enterprise Transformation (Bronze) Award at the Pro-Enterprise Panel – Singapore Business Federation (PEP-SBF) Awards Ceremony in September and November 2023, respectively, for supporting the Hyundai Motor Group Innovation Centre in Singapore's (HMGICS) operations in Singapore.

Recognising the need to adapt to the evolving landscape, Singapore Customs (Customs) endeavours to continually enhance and streamline customs procedures and reduce costs for businesses. One example of Singapore Customs' pro-enterprise endeavours is the customs facilitation provided to the HMGICS in the Jurong Innovation District (JID), which aims to spearhead advancements in

automotive technologies, particularly in electric vehicle (EV) production.

Customs adopted a risk-management approach to facilitate, empower and enhance HMGICS's level of compliance to pave the way for the growth of the electric vehicle manufacturing in Singapore. In order to facilitate HMGICS' high-tech electric vehicles manufacturing facility using automation, robotics and artificial intelligence, Customs proactively collaborated with HMGICS and other key stakeholders to enact necessary legislation and streamline processes, notably expediting the outbound movement of goods from HMGICS' warehouse at the Free Trade Zone to the manufacturing facility in JID. Beyond supporting industry growth, this initiative also contributed to the potential time savings of approximately 1,600 manhours per month for HMGICS.



Celebrating Excellence: Customs officers recognised for outstanding contributions

The Public Sector Transformation (PST) Awards were presented during the Public Service Week (PSW) on 5 July 2023, and the recipients of the MOF Family Group Level Awards 2023 were recognised at the MOF Exchange on 20 September 2023. Let's meet the awardees!



Aaron Cheona







Ong Mui Ling.



Service Delivery Excellence Award: Introduction of New Micro distillery Excise Factory Licence Type of the Manufacturing of Intoxicating Liquors.



Exemplary Innovator Award: Using Data Analytics to Detect Under Declared

Dare to do award:



Consortium Blockchain Between Singapore Customs and the General Administration of Customs, China (GACC).



mplementation of Optionally Manned Operations at Brani Export nspection Station (BEIS).



Citizen Engagement Excellence Aword: Supporting Hyundai Motor Group Innovation Centre in Singopore.

Reducing customs checks on goods traded within ASEAN

A significant milestone was achieved on 19 September 2023 for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) when the customs administrations of all 10 ASEAN Member States (AMS) signed the Mutual Recognition Arrangement (MRA) of their respective Authorised Economic Operator (AEO) Programmes [AAMRA]; with a view of implementing the regional AEO MRA by 2025.

With the AAMRA offering certified AMS AEOs smoother cargo clearance and documentary checks within ASEAN, we are also further advancing our achievement of a highly integrated and cohesive ASEAN economy – as per the goals of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) Blueprint 2025. Other than facilitating regional trade, the AAMRA is further expected to enhance supply chain security as the other AMS recognise the compatibility of Singapore Customs' Secure Trade Partnership-Plus (STP-Plus) programme with their respective AEO programmes.

Affirming these strengths of the AAMRA, Mr Tan Hung Hooi, Director-General of Singapore Customs, said, "I hope the AAMRA will provide further opportunities for AMS to negotiate with non-ASEAN partners as a bloc, furthering the role of the AEC".

In Singapore, companies must be under the STP-Plus programme to enjoy the benefits of AAMRA which include cost savings with better predictability

of cargo movement arising from expedited customs clearance and reduced documentation across ASEAN.

Mr Tan thus encouraged more companies to come on board the STP-Plus programme to leverage the advantages offered through the network of MRA partners.

Six AMS – Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand – have jointly assessed and validated each other's national AEO Programmes, ensuring their alignment with the World Customs Organization (WCO) SAFE Framework of Standards to Secure and Facilitate Global Trade (SAFE Framework). These programmes are also deemed mutually comparable. With this step completed, these six AMS commenced their six-month pilot in December 2023, with the aim of implementing the AAMRA in the third quarter of 2024.

The remaining four AMS - Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam – are in the process of getting more companies to be part of their AEO programmes. Once ready, they will also jointly validate the mutual comparability of their AEO procedures and their alignment with the SAFE Framework. A second AAMRA pilot involving these AMS is targeted to be launched sometime in 2024.

Singapore's total trade volume with AMS averaged S\$311.2 billion for the past three years (2021-2023).





TRAVELLING BACK OR JUST VISITING SINGAPORE? **HERE'S WHAT YOU** SHOULD KNOW!

Whether you are coming home or just visiting Singapore, it is important to note your legal obligations if you intend to bring any dutiable or taxable goods through our checkpoints. Upon arriving in Singapore, it is your responsibility to make accurate and complete declarations of all such items in your possession.

You can proactively declare and pay, up to three days in advance of your arrival. This is the convenience that the <u>Customs@SG Web Application</u> offers; you can declare and pay duty and tax on purchases exceeding your duty-free concession and Goods and Services Tax (GST) import relief effortlessly – anytime, anywhere. Should you still choose to pay upon arrival, kindly approach any checking officers to inform them of your intention to make a declaration or proceed to the Singapore Customs Tax Payment Office or Customs Declaration kiosk onsite at our land and sea checkpoints.

Evading taxes and/or duties is an offence, rendering you liable to serious consequences. Upon conviction, evasion could result in a fine of up to 20 times the amount of duty and GST evaded, or imprisonment for up to two years. To further illustrate these potential repercussions, here are some of the outcomes of our joint enforcement operations with the Immigration & Checkpoints Authority (ICA) at the various checkpoints in 2023.

What Happened at Changi Airport...

In May 2023, we found 115 travellers not declaring their dutiable and taxable goods upon arrival.

These arose from enhanced checks conducted on in-bound travellers at the Arrival Halls of all Changi Airport Terminals during the operation. We inspected

the luggage of arriving travellers for undeclared dutiable and taxable goods, as well as any prohibited or controlled items. The total amount of duty and GST recovered was \$18,491; with the total composition sum imposed close to \$28,000. Highlighted below is one such case for which a composition sum was issued:



gaporean was found with five undeclared luxury bags that he and his girlfriend purchased overseas. The five bags were valued at \$13,825; and the amount of GST involved was \$1,106. A composition sum of \$5,000 was imposed.

Read our media release for more details on this operation at Changi Airport.

What Happened at the Two Land Checkpoints...

During the operations conducted at Woodlands and Tuas Checkpoints in October 2023, \$9,700 in composition sums were imposed on 58 travellers and importers who had failed to declare and pay GST for their overseas purchases.

While half of the cases were tobacco-related, those involving home ware and furnishings – like parts of furniture items, and curtains - as well as fashion and personal accessories - including luxury bags, shoes and belts - comprised about 28 per cent of the cases. The total amount of duty and GST recovered was \$624.45. Shown below is one such case involving the issuance of composition sum to the offender:



A male Work Permit Holder failed to declare 10 sets of night curtains that were intended for commercial use, and which we found in his vehicle. The amount of GST involved was \$60.40 and a composition sum of \$600 was imposed.

For more details on the operations at Woodlands and Tuas Checkpoints, continue reading here.

What Happened at the Singapore Cruise Centre...

During the November 2023 operations, we imposed \$5,940 in composition sums on 15 travellers who failed to declare dutiable and taxable goods upon arrival.

The total amount of duty and GST recovered from the cases uncovered was \$409.30. Shown below is one such case for which we issued a composition sum:



Two male travellers were found with 103 pieces of circuit boards and 15 pieces of smart padlocks, with a total value of \$523.35. Investigations revealed them to be couriers, transporting items on behalf of a company in Singapore. The amount of GST involved was \$41.85 and a composition sum of \$415 was imposed.

For a smooth and hassle-free arrival experience, we would like to remind all travellers to strictly abide by Singapore's customs. Remember that failure to comply may result in penalties and even prosecution.

If you are unsure of the applicable GST import relief entitlements or duty-free allowances, you may also consult Singapore Customs officers at the onsite Customs Tax Payment Offices. For more information, contact the Singapore Customs hotline at 6355 2000 or refer to our website.

04) INSYNC

Case files: Enforcement Highlights

CASE 1: MAN ARRESTED FOR DELIVERING DUTY-UNPAID CIGARETTES WITH HIS COMPANY VEHICLE

On 14 September 2023, Singapore Customs conducted an operation at a carpark in Jurong West Street 41. Our officers saw a Singaporean man, 27, walking towards a van. They moved in and upon checking, uncovered and seized a total of 1,430 cartons and 3,200 packets of duty-unpaid cigarettes. The total duty and Goods and Services Tax (GST) evaded amounted to \$171,850 and \$15,470 respectively.

The man was arrested and investigations revealed that he was engaged by an unknown person to collect and deliver the duty-unpaid cigarettes to customers. The man was using his company van for the deliveries – including on that day whereby, under the unknown person's instructions, he had collected and loaded the duty-unpaid cigarettes for delivery. The man was sentenced to 21 months' imprisonment.





The company van utilised for the delivery of the duty-unpaid

CASE 2: MAN ARRESTED AND 216 BOTTLES OF DUTY-UNPAID LIQUOR SEIZED

On 31 August 2023, Singapore Customs officers conducted an operation at Woodlands Drive 60 to look out for the recipient of a consignment of 216 bottles of duty-unpaid liquor. A 33-year-old male Chinese national was spotted receiving and loading the consignment onto a van. Our officers then approached and arrested him.

Investigations revealed that the man was engaged by an unknown person to receive and store the duty-unpaid liquor at his residence. The unknown person would then arrange for the liquor to be subsequently collected from the accused.

The total duty and GST evaded amounted to about \$26,957 and \$2,679 respectively. The man was fined \$255,000. He did not pay the court fine, and served six weeks and eight days' imprisonment.



The duty-unpaid liquor was loaded onto this van.







The duty-unpaid liquor found in the van.



Reaffirming partnerships with international counterparts

s globalisation continues to redefine the trade landscape, establishing and nurturing strong partnerships with international counterparts remains essential to Singapore Customs. Through active engagement in international fora and hosting of visiting delegations, Singapore Customs remains dedicated to fostering collaboration and ensuring the smooth flow of goods and services across borders.

Visit by the United Kingdom His Majesty's Revenue & Customs (UK HMRC)

9 October 2023, Singapore

In October 2023, Mr Lim Teck Leong, Deputy Director-General, warmly welcomed a delegation from the UK HMRC, led by Mrs Angela MacDonald, UK HMRC's Deputy CEO and Second Permanent Secretary. The bilateral meeting reaffirmed the close and longstanding partnership between the two customs administrations in trade facilitation and enforcement. The delegation also toured the Customs Operations Command.



Mr Lim Teck Leong (fifth from right), DDG of Singapore Customs, welcoming Mrs Angela MacDonald (fifth from left), UK HMRC's Deputy CEO and Second Permanent Secretary, and delegation to Customs Operations Command.

Visit by Zakat, Tax and Customs Authority (ZATCA)

12 to 13 October 2023, Singapore

Furthering our commitment to sharing knowledge and expertise, Singapore Customs hosted a delegation from ZATCA of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Mr Tan Hung Hooi, Director-General, welcomed His Excellency Eng. Suhail Bin M. Abanmi, Governor of ZATCA, and the Saudi delegation.

The delegation learnt about Singapore's Authorised Economic Operator programme, the National Single Window for trade-related declarations, and the risk assessment framework. We also shared information on our training and development programmes for officers. The delegation also visited the Changi Airport, where they visited the Goods and Services Tax (GST) refund counters and gained insights into the GST refund process for travellers.





6th Joint Customs Middle Management Programme (JCMMP) – Fireside chat with Directors-General and Senior Management

30 October 2023, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

This year's JCMMP brought together 26 participants from ASEAN Member States (AMS) of Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam; as well as Australia and Japan.

Mr Tan Hung Hooi, Director-General, engaged in a virtual fireside chat with the participants, heads of customs administrations and senior management officials from Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Thailand, and Vietnam. Besides offering perspectives on managing work stress, Mr Tan also shared leadership views and insights on managing the growing expectations and demands placed on customs administrations in an increasingly interconnected global environment.

The annual regional training initiative aims to enhance competencies and build strong networks among middle managers of ASEAN customs administrations and strategic partners.





Mr Tan Hung Hooi (left), DG of Singapore Customs, shared his leadership views and insights with the JCMMP participants

31st ASEAN Single Window Steering Committee (ASWSC) meeting

29 November to 1 December 2023, Manila, the Philippines

Chaired by Mr Lim Teck Leong, Deputy Director-General, the meeting convened trade and customs representatives from ASEAN Member States (AMS) both physically and virtually. The focus was on the progress of ASWSC initiatives and the priorities for 2024.

Notable progress was observed, with Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, the Philippines and Singapore reaffirming their commitment to join Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and Vietnam in fully implementing the Electronic Certificate of Origin (e-Form D) under the ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (ATIGA) by January 2024. This commitment by all AMS underscores the collective effort to enhance convenience and cost savings for the trading community. Singapore Customs issued a circular to traders and declaring agents on 31 October 2023 to inform of the full

implementation of the ATIGA e-Form D by 1 January 2024.

The meeting also served as a platform for discussions with dialogue partners Japan, Republic of Korea, and the United States. These engagements aimed to further the progress of the mutual exchange of electronic trade-related documents between ASEAN and its dialogue partners.



Regional engagements to advance strategic trade controls

ingapore Customs continuously engages and maintains robust relations with our international counterparts and industry practitioners on the strategic trade front, as part of Singapore's commitment to advance strategic trade controls in the region against proliferation activities.

Study visit by Brunei officials

10 to 12 October 2023, Singapore

Representing various agencies from Brunei Darussalam, the government officials in this study visit were here to further deepen their understanding of Singapore's Strategic Goods Control regime. The delegation met officers from Singapore Customs, the Attorney-General's Chambers (AGC) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) over two and a half days to exchange views and best practices. They also went on a site visit to the Tuas Export Inspection Station (TEIS) to understand more about Customs' procedures when conducting container checks.

Jointly organised by Singapore Customs and the European Union's Partner-to-Partner Export Control Programme for Dual Use Goods, the successful study visit bears testament to Singapore's steadfast commitment towards advancing strategic trade controls in the region.





Malaysia Strategic Trade Summit 2023

23 to 27 October 2023, Kuala Lumpur

Participating as a panellist in two strategic trade related forums – the 2nd Women in Strategic Trade Forum and the 3rd Southeast Forum on Export Control – of the Malaysia Strategic Trade Summit 2023, Singapore Customs shared about our organisation's career development opportunities as well as Singapore's challenges and successes in implementing strategic trade controls.

The Summit participants comprised industry representatives and government officials from various regions and countries – including Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Chile, the European Union, Germany, Indonesia, Japan, Laos PDR, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Thailand, the United States and Vietnam. Topics discussed included strategic trade control, compliance, and women's advancement in Strategic Trade Management.



On the issue of women's advancement in strategic trade controls, Ms Lim Sok Peng, Head of Trade Security Branch, reaffirmed Singapore Customs' commitment towards building an inclusive environment where all officers – regardless of gender – are empowered to pursue their professional aspirations and to develop to their fullest potential.



Enhancing Capacity for Implementation of United Nations Security Council Sanctions Resolutions and other Sanctions Regimes in Southeast Asia 2023 Conference

21 to 22 November 2023, Singapore

Singapore Customs and the German Federal Office for Economic Affairs and Export Control (BAFA) jointly organised the Conference which fostered dialogue and exchanges on sanctions implementation and best practices among the participating countries - including Australia, Cambodia, Germany, Indonesia, Laos PDR,



Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, the Philippines, Singapore and the United States.

On 20 November 2023, Senior Assistant Director-General (Trade), Mr Lee Boon Chong, had a bilateral meeting with BAFA's President, Mr Torsten Safarik; reaffirming the close cooperation between both countries on strategic trade controls matters.



New STP partner on board

Chong, delivering his Opening Remarks during the

he Secure Trade Partnership (STP) is a Singapore Customs certification programme that encourages companies to adopt robust security measures and contribute towards improving the security of the global supply chain. It is consistent with the World Customs Organization SAFE Framework of Standards to Secure and Facilitate Global Trade. The following companies were STP-certified in the third quarter of 2023. A company with higher security measures in place will be eligible for STP-Plus.

Companies with STP-Plus certification will receive additional facilitation through Mutual Recognition Arrangements with our international counterparts, such as expedited cargo clearance.

Rhenus Warehousing Solutions Pte Ltd

International warehousing solutions provider

"At Rhenus Warehousing Solutions, we take great pride in our recent re-certification under the esteemed Secure Trade Partnership. This achievement reflects our commitment to providing a compliant and secure supply chain. We stand by our promise to securely warehouse the valuable goods entrusted to us by clients, leveraging the strength of our global network and the innovation tailored for diverse industries," said Mr. Rathnakumar Palani, Managing Director – Warehousing Solutions, Singapore/Malaysia

Soonest Express (S) Pte Ltd

Global freight & logistics services provider

"We are honoured to be certified and be part of the STP. The certification is our commitment to our clients and partners on our high level of services in providing total visibility and security of their goods. This will further provide our customers added assurance that our internal processes are consistent and fully compliant," said Mr Joey Lee, President, Soonest Express

Protect yourself from customs-related scams

rom time to time, members of the public contact Singapore Customs to confirm if the documents they received, claiming to be from Singapore Customs, are genuine. These communications often demand payment for the release of their goods. Don't take the bait! Recognise the signs to prevent yourself from falling victim to customs-related scams.

SCENARIO #1

You get a text message from an unknown number claiming that Singapore Customs has detained your items.

TIP:

- Ignore such text messages, and be wary of messages from people who claim to be Singapore Customs officials.
- Do not click on URL links in unsolicited messages, as the content may be malicious.

< n +4917062513450 = 1</p> KELLNER Siebtechnik Block number ustoms. Please complet

Sample of scam text message.

SCENARIO #2

You received an email claiming to be from the Director-General of Singapore Customs. However, it was sent from a GMAIL account. It is requesting payment for a parcel "in our custody".

TIP:

- Verify the authenticity of emails from Singapore Customs by checking if the sender's email address contains the domain @customs.gov.sg.
- Official correspondence from Singapore Customs would NOT be sent from personal email accounts such as Gmail, Yahoo, or other unofficial email domains.

On Thu, 19 Oct 2023 at 3:25, Tan hung Hoo The Singapore customs hereby guarantee you that your box with the company STATE-FAST LOGISTICS will be delivered to you as you have been complying with the shipment terms given to you under the said company This delivery guarantee was approved by appropriate law enforcement agency, Also the parcel has been with us for months and is available for pickup, I believe you have been notified earlier of the balance you owe \$650, you are hereby advice to make payments immediately and prepare your agent for the parcel collection, if you still want this parcel to remain in our custody, kept safe and few weeks given for you to make payments \$650 to retrieve the parcel you have to pay \$130 sgp now otherwise there will be consequences Approved by Tan hung hool Agency Executive Director-General of customs

SCENARIO #3

You received a "circular" with the Singapore Customs logo, purportedly issued by the Director-General of Singapore Customs, requesting payment for releasing a detained parcel.

NOTE:

• Singapore Customs does not direct individuals to pay charges to release detained goods.



Be cautious, stay informed, and protect yourself from potential customs-related scams. If in doubt, you can always contact Singapore Customs at <u>customs feedback@customs.gov.sg</u> for verification.

TRAINING CALENDAR

With the appointment of Nanyang Polytechnic (NYP) and Republic Polytechnic (RP) to conduct the existing suite of business courses since January 2020, the business courses conducted by Singapore Customs Academy have ceased from January 2020.

For the latest course updates and to sign up for the business courses conducted by NYP or RP, please visit the respective polytechnic's website. All courses will be conducted virtually except for SC111.

SC100

5 TO 6 FEB 2024. 4 TO 5 MAR 2024. 1 TO 2 APR 2024 SC101

7 FEB 2024. 6 MAR 2024. 3 APR 2024

Same dates for SC102 & SC103 Same dates for SC102 & SC103

19 TO 20 FEB 2024. 18 TO 19 MAR 2024. 22 TO 23 APR 2024 SC101

21 FEB 2024. 20 MAR 2024. 24 APR 2024

BASICS OF EVERY DECLARANT

This course provides an overview of customs procedures for the import and export of goods, the basic requirements for preparing TradeNet declarations, the classification of goods, and the rules of origin:

- SC101 Customs Procedures (Two days)
- SC102 Classification and the Harmonised System (half-day)
- SC103 Rules of Origin/Free Trade Agreements (half-day)

Participants may register for individual modules.

OUTREACH PROGRAMME FOR NEWLY-REGISTERED MANUFACTURERS

Conducted by Singapore Customs, this programme is

For enquiries, please email customs_roo@customs.gov.sg.

SC111

NYP:

2 FEB 2024, 8 MAR 2024, 5 APR 2024

22 FEB 2024. 21 MAR 2024. 25 APR 2024

HANDS-ON TRADENET DECLARATION

This one-day workshop provides new declarants basic information on TradeNet and its various message and declaration types.

The guided practical session uses simulated scenarios to prepare and submit a declaration using the Government Frontend Solution.

SC200

NYP:

8 FEB 2024, 7 MAR 2024 4 APR 2024

Same dates for SC201 & SC202

23 FEB 2024, 22 MAR 2024, 26 APR 2024

Same dates for SC201 & SC202

STRATEGIC GOODS CONTROL PROGRAMME

This one-day seminar provides an overview of Singapore's strategic goods control system and its regulations, registration procedures and permit requirements for strategic goods transactions, and the essentials of an internal (export control) compliance programme.

The seminar comprises two modules:

- SC201 Basics of Strategic Goods Control (half-day)
- SC202 Essentials of Internal (Export Control) Compliance Programme (half-day)

Participants may register for individual modules.