

SINGAPORE CUSTOMS PRESS STATEMENT

SINGAPORE CUSTOMS ARRESTED TWO MEN FOR IMPORTATION AND DEALING IN CONTRABAND CIGARETTES

On 11 August 2003, acting on intelligence gathered, Customs Special Investigation Branch officers arrested two Chinese male Malaysians (aged 22 and 35, unemployed) and seized 250 cartons of duty-unpaid cigarettes. The customs duty and GST of the cigarettes are \$12,750.00 and \$706.01 respectively.

Information was received that two Malaysian vehicles were used in conveying contraband cigarettes at Marsiling Drive area. An operation was mounted between 7 and 11 August 2003 to keep watch of the suspect vehicles at the vicinity of Blk 7A Marsiling Drive.

At about 5.30 am this morning, officers saw the suspect Malaysian registered car (Proton Waja) driving up the multi-storey car park of Blk 7A Marsiling Drive. The car parked next to another Malaysian registered car, a Mazda 626. The drivers alighted and started to unload cartons from the Mazda 626 and loading them into the boot of the Proton Waja. Officers moved in and declared office. Both the cars were searched. Officers found 33 cartons of cigarettes in the boot of the Proton Waja and 217 cartons in a specially-constructed compartment under the rear seat of the Mazda 626. The cigarettes were of the brands Marlboro and Salem. On questioning, the two men admitted that the cigarettes were duty-unpaid. The men were arrested and the contraband cigarettes and cars were seized.

Preliminary investigations revealed that both men were working for a cigarette smuggling syndicate. The role of the Mazda driver was to smuggle the cigarettes into Singapore. The smuggled cigarettes hidden in the special compartment were to be transferred onto the Proton Waja for subsequent delivery to the local buyers. The men claimed that they were paid RM400.00 each for every trip made.

The two men will be charged in court on 12 August 2003. Upon conviction by the Court, the offender may be fined up to 20 times the tax evaded.

The arrest of the two runners and seizure of the cars will be a direct blow on the smuggling syndicate. The operation was a success despite the new method of concealment of the contraband cigarettes. The detection of the case is another example of the effective investigative capabilities of our officers.

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11 August 2003