

## SINGAPORE CUSTOMS PRESS STATEMENT

### Car with tampered fuel gauge forfeited

On 11 Oct 2003, a car with tampered fuel gauge was ordered to be forfeited by the Court.

On 9 May 2003, at about 12.30pm, Mr Lim Kim Poh drove his car SBL 448 E to the Woodlands Checkpoint. At the checkpoint, an Immigration & Checkpoint Authority (ICA) Officer asked him whether he had  $\frac{3}{4}$  tank of fuel in his car's fuel tank. The car's fuel gauge showed the meter at more than  $\frac{3}{4}$  tank full. On further examining the car, the officer found a switch below the steering wheel. Only then did Lim admit that his fuel tank was  $\frac{1}{2}$  full and that the fuel gauge had been tampered with. The case was handed over to Singapore Customs for follow-up. The car was inspected and it was confirmed that its fuel gauge had been tampered with and the amount of fuel in the fuel tank was slightly less than  $\frac{1}{2}$  full. In the course of investigations, Lim admitted that he had driven his vehicle through the Checkpoint with the tampered fuel gauge on about 100 occasions. Lim was arrested and the car was seized by Singapore Customs.

Lim was charged in court on 10 May 2003. For the 1<sup>st</sup> charge of not having the minimum amount of motor spirit in his vehicle's fuel tank when attempting to leave Singapore on 9 May 2003 under Section 136A of the Customs Act, he was sentenced to a fine of \$500, in default 1-week's imprisonment. For the 2<sup>nd</sup> charge of giving false information which is an offence under Section 129(c) of the Customs Act, he was sentenced to 2 weeks' imprisonment.

Subsequently, at the Forfeiture Hearing held in Court No. 7 on 11 Oct 2003, the Court was satisfied that the car was the subject matter of the offence and was also used in the commission of the offence. The car was thus ordered to be forfeited under Section 123 (2) of the Customs Act.

Tampering with the fuel gauge of the vehicle so that it gives a false reading that the amount of fuel in his fuel tank is  $\frac{3}{4}$  full is a serious offence. It shows a deliberate intent to cheat the authorities. The penalty for such an offence is accordingly severe.

So far this year, 10 persons have been charged in court for tampering with their car fuel gauges. Of these, 5 cases are before the courts. In the year 2002, there were 3 cases of tampered fuel meter while in 2001, 11 such cases.

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SINGAPORE CUSTOMS

13 Oct 2003