



PRESS RELEASE

SINGAPORE CUSTOMS SEIZED 7,500 CARTONS OF DUTY-UNPAID CIGARETTES

Singapore Customs officers arrested a 31 yrs male, Malaysian Indian and seized a total of 7,500 cartons (75,000 packets) of duty-unpaid cigarettes in a stakeout on 20 Dec 2005. The estimated market value of the contraband cigarettes is \$825,000, and the total duty and GST payable is \$561,000.

2 On 20 Dec 2005, Customs officers kept surveillance at the vicinity of Bedok Industrial Park. On the same day at about 2.15 pm, the officers saw a lorry arriving at the location and parked alongside the loading/unloading bay at Block 3011 of the Industrial Park. The driver alighted and opened the canvas covering of the lorry. He then unloaded boxes from the lorry and stacked them on the loading bay. Suspecting the boxes to contain duty-unpaid cigarettes, the officers moved in to inspect the goods. A total of 7,500 cartons of contraband cigarettes were found. The driver was arrested.

3 Preliminary investigations revealed that the driver was a member of a local cigarettes smuggling syndicate. The contraband cigarettes were to be temporarily stored at the Bedok Industrial Park until they are collected in various quantities for delivery to the illegal distributors and peddlers. The industrial park offered a convenient storage for the goods. With its heavy movement of lorries and other goods vehicles, collection and delivery of the smuggled goods was less likely to arouse suspicion. The cigarettes were meant for distribution to factories, construction sites and dormitories of foreign workers. The man will be charged in court on 22 Dec 2005 for offences under the Customs Act.

4 Singapore Customs warn that the storing, possession, conveying or dealing with any contraband cigarettes are serious offences under the Customs Act. Singapore Customs takes a serious view of any attempt to evade duty and tax and will not hesitate to prosecute offenders in court. Upon conviction by the court, first time offenders can be fined up to a maximum of 20 times the amount of duty evaded. For second or subsequent convictions, offenders can be jailed for up to 2 years, as well as being fined. The offenders also face further fines based on the amount of GST evaded.

5 Members of the public with information on smuggling activities or evasion of customs duty or GST can contact Singapore Customs Intelligence Hotline on 1800-2330000 or email to customs_intelligence@customs.gov.sg.