



SINGAPORE CUSTOMS ARRESTED KEY SUPPLIERS TO YEW TEE CIGARETTE PEDDLERS

Singapore Customs officers smashed a smuggling syndicate – two male Singaporeans (aged 53 and 32) and eight Chinese nationals (four females and four males, aged between 25 and 42 years) were arrested in a covert operation on 31 Mar 2006. Altogether, 11,300 packets duty-unpaid cigarettes and over 4,000 pieces of uncensored and obscene VCDs/DVDs were seized. The estimated market value of the contraband cigarettes is \$101,700 and the total duty and GST payable is \$84,700.

2 On 31 Mar 2006 at about 12.30 pm, Customs officers keeping surveillance at the car park at Merbok Crescent intercepted a van suspected to be conveying duty-unpaid cigarettes. In the van were boxes containing 4,800 packets of duty-unpaid Marlboro cigarettes. The two persons in the vehicle (a male Singaporean, aged 32 and a female Chinese national, aged 38) were immediately arrested. The two led the officers to a flat nearby where six Chinese nationals were found (three males and three females). Some were in the midst of sorting and packing VCDs/DVDs. There were a total of 4,000 uncensored and obscene optical discs. All six were detained for questioning.

3 On the same day at about 3.30 pm, another party of Customs officers laid ambush at the top floor of a 4-storey car park at Fajar Road. Two men were packing cartons of cigarettes into grocery/fruit boxes in a van. On checking, a total of 6,500 packets of duty-unpaid Marlboro and Gudung Garam (Indonesian clove) cigarettes were found. The men (a Singaporean, aged 53 and a Chinese national, aged 42) were arrested. The men had used a van and a lorry as mobile stores for their contraband cigarettes. They would park their vehicles in some secluded car parks to conduct the illegal packing and distribution activities. To avoid detection, the cigarettes were wrapped in newspapers and packed in grocery or fruit boxes. The two arrested earlier at the Merbok Crescent site had just taken delivery of their share of the contraband from the Fajar Road car park. The cigarettes were meant for distribution to the Yew Tee peddlers.

4 Preliminary investigations revealed that the two arrested at Fajar Road were supplying duty-unpaid cigarettes to the group arrested at the Merbok Crescent site at \$30 per carton while the latter in turn would distribute them to the peddlers at Yew Tee for sale to buyers at \$50 per carton. Today's arrest is a definite hit against the illegal cigarette peddling situation at Yew Tee. The offenders will be charged in court on 1 Apr 2006 for offences committed under the Customs Act. The seven immigration offenders and uncensored/obscene optical discs will be referred to Police for follow-up.

5 Singapore Customs warns that storing, possession, conveying or dealing with any contraband cigarettes are serious offences under the Customs Act. First time offenders can be fined up to a maximum of 20 times the amount of duty evaded. For the second and 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.

6 We would like to urge anyone with information on any illegal activities involving duty-unpaid cigarettes to contact the Singapore Customs Intelligence Hotline on 1800-2330000 or email to customs_intelligence@customs.gov.sg. Also call us if you know of any person dealing in duty-unpaid cigarettes, either as distributors or sellers or if you have been approached by people who claim that they have cheaper cigarettes for sale. Members of the public are advised against buying duty-unpaid cigarettes. Those caught buying or having in their possession duty-unpaid cigarettes stand to face severe penalties.