

MEDIA RELEASE

SINGAPORE CUSTOMS SUCCESSFULLY TRACKED DOWN WANTED MAN INVOLVED IN CIGARETTE SMUGGLING

Man suspected to be linked to 171,000 packets seized cigarettes worth \$1.7 million

He managed to run away the last time, but was not so lucky this time round. On 7 February 2007, Singapore Customs successfully arrested a Singaporean man aged 48 years old, who was on the run since October 2006. He is suspected to be linked to two cigarette smuggling cases involving 171,000 packets of duty-unpaid cigarettes worth \$1.7 million. The duty and GST amounted to \$1.3 million.

2. On 7 February 2007, Singapore Customs officers laid an ambush at a housing block in Toa Payoh estate. The officers kept close watch at the vicinity of the rubbish collection centre for a sustained period of time before sighting the man alighting from his car. Officers who were undercover timed the right moment and moved in to arrest him. He tried to run away and put up a struggle when confronted, but was eventually subdued by the officers. Officers searched his car and found 3,500 packets of duty-unpaid cigarettes worth over \$35,000. Total duty and GST was \$26,220.

3. The subject is suspected to be involved in a case detected on 8 October 2006 where 121,000 packets of contraband cigarettes were seized from a warehouse at Clementi Loop. In his attempt to flee, he rammed his car into a Customs blockade, crashing onto a Customs car and nearly running down an officer. Six others were arrested while the subject was placed on the wanted list. He is also suspected to be linked to a 2nd case where five men were arrested and 50,000 packets contraband cigarettes seized from a store at Loyang Way on 12 October 2006. The man will be charged in Court for customs offences related to cigarette smuggling.

4. Singapore Customs warns that buying, selling, conveying, delivering, storing, keeping, having in possession or dealing with contraband cigarettes are serious offences under the Customs. Stiff penalties are imposed for such offences. On conviction by the court, offenders can be jailed as well as fined. The vehicles used in the commission of the offence are also liable to forfeiture. The public are also advised against buying duty-unpaid cigarettes. For a packet of duty-unpaid cigarettes, buyers stand to face a minimum fine of \$200 or prosecution in court. Members of the public with information on smuggling activities or evasion of customs duty or GST can contact the Singapore Customs Intelligence Hotline on 1800-2330000 or email to customs_intelligence@customs.gov.sg.

ISSUED BY: SINGAPORE CUSTOMS

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