

MEDIA RELEASE

JOINT ENFORCEMENT OPERATION - ILLEGAL LIQUOR SYNDICATE SMASHED, FIVE MEN ARRESTED AND DRUGS SEIZED

On 15 February 2007, a Singapore-based illegal liquor smuggling syndicate was busted in an early morning joint operation between officers of Singapore Customs (SC), Central Narcotics Bureau (CNB) and Immigration & Checkpoints Authority (ICA). Five men (two Singaporeans, both aged 32 and three Malaysians, aged 29, 38 and 45) were arrested. Two Malaysian-registered cars with specially-constructed tanks were seized. Also seized were jerry cans containing 504 litres of brownish alcoholic liquid suspected to be smuggled liquor, 172 filled bottles affixed with Hennessy VSOP and Jim Beam labels, and assorted bottling paraphernalia such as bottle caps, labels and bottling machines. The duty and GST on the seized alcoholic substance totaled \$22,600.

2 At about 9 am on 15 February 2007, a combined force comprising officers from SC, CNB and ICA raided a house at Dedap Place. The officers keeping watch of the premises saw a man siphoning some brownish liquid from a Malaysian-registered car into a jerry can with the use of a plastic tube. The brownish liquid was suspected to be liquor. A check on the car revealed a specially-constructed tank. The man was arrested. At the same time, another team of officers waiting at the vicinity of Jalan Kayu intercepted a 2nd Malaysian-registered vehicle. The 2nd car was also built with a special tank that contained a similar brownish liquid suspected to be liquor. The driver was also arrested.

3 In the house at Dedap Place, officers arrested another three men. On searching the house at Dedap Place, officers found labels, bottle caps, cartons and empty liquor bottles of popular brands such as Hennessy VSOP, Jim Beam and Martel. Besides the assortment of bottling paraphernalia and bottling machines, officers also found 172 filled bottles capped and affixed with Hennessy VSOP and Jim Beam labels. Preliminary investigations revealed that one of the Singaporean suspects had rented the house at Dedap Place since November 2006 for the bottling operation. The house was surfaced based on information received by CNB when it started investigation into the trafficking activities of one of the Singaporean suspects. CNB's investigations revealed that the house was being used more for the storage of contraband, suspected to be duty-unpaid liquor. The suspect liquor of unknown origin was smuggled into Singapore in the specially-constructed tanks in the two cars. The liquor would be pumped out from the tank into plastic jerry cans using a tube, and subsequently filled into bottles (suspected to be used bottles) of various popular brands. These bottles would later be capped, labeled and packed in cartons destined for distribution to lounges, pubs and other nightspots for sale to unsuspecting customers.

4 Follow-up raid at the home of one of the Singaporean suspects resulted in the seizure of 20 'Ecstasy' tablets and 30 'Erinin-5' tablets, controlled drugs under the Misuse of Drugs Act. In addition to the Customs offences, he will also be investigated for drug offences under the Misuse of Drugs Act. Investigations are underway for all the suspects.

5 Singapore Customs warns that buying, selling, conveying, delivering, storing, keeping, having in possession or dealing with contraband liquors are serious offences under the Customs Act. 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. Singapore Customs takes a serious view of any attempt to evade

duty and tax and will not hesitate to prosecute offenders in court. Members of the public with information on smuggling activities should contact the Singapore Customs Intelligence Hotline at 1800-2330000 or email to customs_intelligence@customs.gov.sg

ISSUED BY: **SINGAPORE CUSTOMS
CENTRAL NARCOTICS BUREAU
IMMIGRATION & CHECKPOINTS AUTHORITY**

DATE: **16 FEBRUARY 2007**