

JOINT SC-ICA MEDIA RELEASE

LOCAL IMPORTER FACES NINE YEARS JAIL FOR SMUGGLING 175,000 PACKETS OF DUTY-UNPAID CIGARETTES WORTH OVER \$1.5 MILLION

Mohammad Khair Johari Bin Ibrahim, a 45 years old Singaporean man, pleaded guilty to two charges involving the illegal importation of 175,000 packets of duty-unpaid cigarettes worth over \$1.5 million. On 6 March 2007, he was sentenced to fines totaling \$1,310,750 or in default 9 years' imprisonment. He was arrested for cigarette smuggling in a joint enforcement action by two agencies, Singapore Customs (SC) and the Immigration & Checkpoints Authority (ICA).

2 On 22 February 2007, at about 1300 hrs, a 40-footer container truck laden with a consignment of declared furniture was diverted to the Tanjong Pagar Scanning Station for radiographic scanning. While undergoing the scanning, the sharp-eyed ICA officer noticed inconsistencies in the image density of the declared goods. This aroused his suspicions and the container truck was immediately sent for detailed checks.

3 When the container door was opened, cartons of furniture cabinets could be seen stacked at the entrance. The ICA officers, smelling a rat, proceeded to remove the cabinets to access the inner depths of the container. It was then that different cartons containing duty-unpaid cigarettes were found. The Singaporean driver and exhibits were subsequently referred to Singapore Customs for investigations

4 SC officers followed-up by trailing the container and arresting the sole proprietor of the company, Mohammad Khair. In his presence, SC officers inspected and found a total of 17,500 cartons (or 175,000 packets) of assorted brands of duty-unpaid cigarettes, after removing a cover load of furniture from the container. The smuggled cigarettes are estimated to worth more than \$1.5 million, and duty and GST evaded close to \$1.3 million.

5 SC warns that buying, selling, conveying, delivering, storing, keeping, having in possession or dealing with contraband cigarettes are serious offences under the Customs and GST Acts. 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.

6 As Singapore's first line of defence against terrorist threats, ICA has a duty to ensure the security and safety of Singapore. ICA has tightened security checks on passengers and vehicles at the checkpoints to prevent attempts to smuggle in undesirable persons, drugs, weapons, explosives and other contraband. ICA would like to advise the public against smuggling unlawful goods into Singapore.

**ISSUED BY: SINGAPORE CUSTOMS
IMMIGRATION & CHECKPOINTS AUTHORITY**

DATE: 8 MARCH 2007