



## JOINT MEDIA RELEASE BY SINGAPORE CUSTOMS AND IMMIGRATION & CHECKPOINTS AUTHORITY

### **SINGAPORE CUSTOMS (SC) AND IMMIGRATION & CHECKPOINTS AUTHORITY (ICA) SMASHED CIGARETTE SMUGGLING ATTEMPT**

You wouldn't want such doors for your homes! 448 doors used to conceal duty-unpaid cigarettes were seized by enforcement officers.

2 On 9 October 2007, two government agencies, Singapore Customs (SC) and Immigration & Checkpoints Authority (ICA) conducted a joint operation against a cigarette smuggling syndicate. Four Chinese male Singaporeans aged between 34 and 43 years old were arrested. A total of 29,529 packets of assorted brands duty-unpaid cigarettes were seized. The duty and GST evaded amount to \$227,000 for the seized cigarettes with an estimated value of \$266,000.

3 From 6 am on 9 October, SC and ICA officers kept surveillance at a factory unit along Playfair Road for suspected cigarette smuggling activities. At about 1.00 pm, a Malaysia-registered truck was seen entering the target location followed by a Singapore-registered car. Four men who arrived in the car jumped into action shifting two pallets of load which resembled layers of wooden planks from the truck into a ground floor unit. Once the pallets were delivered inside, the men quickly shut the huge metal gate and locked themselves inside the unit.

4 While it appeared to be a legitimate business routine, SC and ICA officers continued the stake-out. As soon as the gate opened, the officers moved in swiftly. The men inside the unit were stunned by the unexpected entrance of the enforcement officers. Checks were conducted in the unit and officers found that the men were actually packing contraband cigarettes into brown boxes. The wooden planks seen earlier were actually wooden doors, and the contraband cigarettes were hidden in the hollowed-out compartments of these doors. Further questioning of the men revealed that the wooden doors were pried open using screw drivers and hammers to uncover the stashed cigarettes. A total of 29,529 packets of assorted brands of cigarettes were uncovered from the secret compartment of 448 units of doors. All four men, aged between 34 and 43 were arrested and charged in Court for customs offences.

5 Cigarettes smugglers have increasingly used devious methods to conceal contrabands, from coffins, false floor boards, chemical compounds and other legitimate consumer goods. A similar Customs-ICA joint operation foiled three men's attempt to smuggle duty-unpaid cigarettes hidden in 33 coffins. They were convicted on 2 October 2007 and sent to jail terms between 18 to 24 months.

6 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.

7 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 our security checks on passengers and vehicles at the checkpoints to prevent attempts to smuggle in undesirable persons, drugs, weapons, explosives and other contraband. The same methods of concealment used by contraband smugglers may be used by terrorists to smuggle arms and explosives to carry out attacks in Singapore. ICA would like to advise the public against smuggling unlawful goods into Singapore.

8 Members of the public with information on smuggling activities or evasion of Customs duty or GST should contact the Singapore Customs Intelligence Hotline at 1800-2330000 or email to [customs\\_intelligence@customs.gov.sg](mailto:customs_intelligence@customs.gov.sg)

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IMMIGRATION & CHECKPOINTS AUTHORITY**

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