



JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

IMMIGRATION & CHECKPOINTS AUTHORITY AND SINGAPORE CUSTOMS

SMUGGLING ATTEMPT TURNS TURTLE

The smugglers must have smugly thought that it would be a smooth-sailing effort for their stash of undeclared turtle eggs, medicinal products and contrabands to be bootlegged into Singapore waters. To their dismay, the smuggling attempt turned turtle when officers from the Immigration & Checkpoints Authority (ICA) and the Singapore Customs (SC) foiled their plans at Marina Wharf last Saturday.

2 On 2 May 2008 at about 1640 hours, ICA and SC officers conducted checks on a cargo vessel MV "Penguin Indoraya II" at Marina Wharf M03. During the course of checks, the officers detected suspected prohibited Indonesian traditional medicine, an assortment of Jamu, amongst declared consignment goods of two consignees. Concurrently, another group of officers detected boxes of sea turtle eggs. Within the same pallet of consignment goods, the sharp-eyed officers also uncovered another four boxes containing assorted duty-unpaid cigarettes.

3 A total of 11 cartons of undeclared assorted Jamu and an estimate of 12,140 pieces of sea turtle eggs were found and referred to the Health Sciences Authority (HSA) and Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority of Singapore (AVA) respectively for further investigations. The officers also seized a total of 23,520 sticks of cigarettes (100 cartons x 200 sticks, 20 cartons x 160 sticks and 20 packets x 16 sticks of duty unpaid cigarettes) and they were handed over to SC for their follow-up actions. The total Customs duty and GST involved amounted to about S\$10,340.

4 According to HSA, the Jamu products in question were labelled as traditional jamu medicines and supposedly containing only natural herbal ingredient. However, the products have been detained for further investigation by HSA as they were imported under suspicious circumstances (without proper trade documentation) and could be adulterated with undeclared prescription drugs or controlled substances.

Related Penalties

5 If the Jamu products brought in are found to be adulterated with undeclared drugs or substances, this will constitute an offence under the Medicines Act and/or the Poisons Act. Any person found guilty of such offences is liable to be jailed up to two years and/or fined up to \$10,000 for each offence (in the case of Poisons Act) or be jailed up to two years and/or fined up to \$5,000 (in the case of Medicines Act).

6 All marine turtles (Cheloniidae species) are highly endangered and are classified in Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). Commercial trade in marine turtles and their parts and products such as turtle eggs is strictly prohibited. Under the Endangered Species (Import and Export) Act, any person who smuggles marine turtle eggs is liable, on conviction, a maximum fine of up to \$50,000 per scheduled species (but not to exceed in the aggregate \$500,000) and/or a jail term of up to 2 years.

7 Upon conviction by the court, first time offenders of cigarette smuggling can be fined up to a maximum of 20 times the amount of duty evaded. For second or subsequent convictions, offenders can be jailed for up to two years, as well as being fined. The offenders also face further fines based on the amount of GST evaded.

8 Singapore Customs 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 conveyances 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 cigarettes, buyers stand to face a minimum fine of \$500 or prosecution in Court.

9 Our borders are our first line of defence in safeguarding Singapore's security. The enhanced security checks are critical to our nation's security. We have tightened our security checks on passengers and vehicles at the checkpoints to prevent attempts to smuggle in undesirable persons, drugs, weapons, explosives and other contrabands. The same methods of concealment used by smugglers may be used by terrorists to smuggle arms and explosives to carry out attacks in Singapore. We seek your continued understanding and cooperation, and would like to advise against smuggling unlawful goods into Singapore.

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