

SINGAPORE CUSTOMS MEDIA RELEASE

SINGAPORE CUSTOMS SEIZED LARGEST HAUL OF DUTY-UNPAID CIGARETTES THIS YEAR - 233,500 PACKETS STASHED IN CONTAINER, 6 MEN ARRESTED

It is the largest haul of contraband cigarettes seized by Singapore Customs so far this year in 2008 - 233,500 packets, or a full container load of cigarettes. The duty-unpaid cigarettes are worth about \$2.1 million, and the duty and GST involved amount to \$1.8 million. Altogether, six men (five Singaporeans, one Malaysian, aged between 38 and 52 years old) suspected to be involved in the case were arrested. Three vans and one saloon car involved in the case were also seized by Singapore Customs.

2. Acting on a tip-off, Singapore Customs mounted a surveillance at a warehouse building along Lower Delta Road which led to the seizure. On 24 Jun 08, Singapore Customs officers lay ambush at the warehouse building to look for possible illicit contraband cigarette activities. At about 10.45 am, six suspicious looking men and three vans arrived at Blk 1093 of Lower Delta Rd. They started unloading boxes from a container parked at the building's unloading bay onto the three vans. When the first van was filled up, the men began transferring the boxes to the second van. Officers moved in at this point of time and arrested the men in the midst of action. The boxes were opened and found to contain duty-unpaid cigarettes. Upon further questioning, the suspects led the officers to the store. Except for empty cigarette carton boxes strewn everywhere, no further cigarettes were found.

3. All six men will be charged in Court on 25 June 2008.

4. Commenting on the case, Mr Lee Boon Chong (李文聰), Assistant Director-General of Customs (Intelligence & Investigation) said, "Our intelligence and investigations efforts have paid off. We have successfully stopped the large haul of illegal cigarettes from proliferating inland. We are sending a stern warning to potential

smugglers not to take any chances as Singapore Customs has intensified enforcement to curb the illegal trade of cigarettes. The public can also help in our enforcement by staying clear of duty-unpaid cigarettes, and to report any of such illegal activities to Singapore Customs”.

5. 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, offenders can be jailed as well as fined. The vehicles used in the commission of such offence are also liable to be forfeited. The public are strongly advised not to buy duty-unpaid cigarettes. For possessing a packet of duty-unpaid cigarettes, an offender may face a minimum fine of \$500 or prosecution in court.

6. Members of the public with information on smuggling activities or evasion of Customs duty or GST should contact the Singapore Customs Hotline at 1800-2330000 or email to customs_intelligence@customs.gov.sg.

END OF RELEASE

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