



SINGAPORE CUSTOMS MEDIA RELEASE

MAN JAILED THREE YEARS FOR SMUGGLING 87,940 PACKETS OF DUTY-UNPAID CIGARETTES CONCEALED BETWEEN GAS BURNERS

Sweep at Hotspot Areas also Nabbed 24 Offenders

On 11 September 2008, Singapore Customs foiled an attempt to smuggle 87,940 packets of cigarettes worth over \$1.03 million. The duty and GST involved amounted to more than \$673,700. The officers also seized 146 gas burners used by the smugglers as cover load to avoid detection. A 47 year-old Singaporean Chinese man, Chia Choon Hock, was sentenced by the Court on 15 September 2008 to three years' jail for his involvement in this case.

2 Arising from intelligence gathered, Singapore Customs officers raided a store at Jalan Pemimpin for illegal activities involving contraband cigarettes. In the store, officers found a man (later identified to be Chia Choon Hock) and seven pallets stacked with 73 boxes suspected to contain contraband cigarettes. In each of the box, there was a gas burner on the top and bottom layer with cartons of cigarettes sandwiched in between. A total of 87,940 packets of contraband cigarettes and 146 gas burners were uncovered from the 73 boxes. Chia admitted that he had declared the seven pallets as gas burners, but actually the latter were just used as a cover load to smuggle the cigarettes to evade detection. On the day of his arrest, Chia went to the store to unload and repack the cigarettes for delivery. Chia was arrested and charged in court. He was sentenced to three years' jail.

Sweep at Hotspot Areas Met with Success

3 While Singapore Customs has achieved some measurable success against smuggling syndicates to cut off the supply of contrabands, our Suppression Team officers have also been out on the streets to nab illegal peddlers and buyers. At a recent 3-day sweep of Geylang from 27 to 29 August 2008, 20 illegal peddlers (15 foreigners, five Singaporeans) were arrested and charged for selling duty-unpaid cigarettes. Another four Singaporean buyers who bought one to

five packets were also slapped with a fine of \$500 per packet. The operation also seized a total of 967 packets of duty-unpaid cigarettes. Singapore Customs will continue to mount island-wide operations to suppress buyers and peddlers of contraband cigarettes, and keep illegal cigarettes off the streets.

Stiff Penalties for Customs Offences

4 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 up to 20 times the amount of duty and GST evaded. Buyers stand to face a minimum fine of \$500 per packet. The vehicles used in the commission of such offence are also liable to be forfeited. The public are strongly advised to stay away from duty-unpaid cigarettes. 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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Contraband cigarettes hidden between layers of gas burners placed at the top and at the bottom to act as cover load.



All 146 burners were used to conceal the duty-unpaid cigarettes. However, the smuggling attempt was foiled by Singapore Customs officers.



Offender Chia Choon Hock was sentenced to 3 years' jail for his involvement in attempting to smuggle and distribute duty-unpaid cigarettes



A total of 87,940 packets of duty-unpaid cigarettes were seized in the raid at the Jalan Pemimpin store by Singapore Customs officers