



## JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

### IMMIGRATION & CHECKPOINTS AUTHORITY AND SINGAPORE CUSTOMS

### ECO-FRIENDLY CIGARETTES, ANYONE?

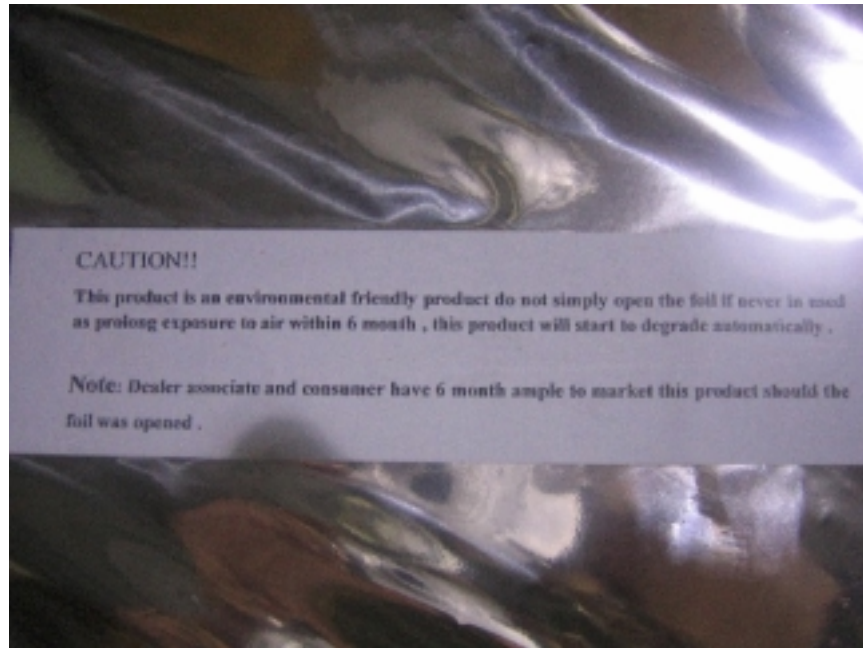
Greenwashing, or making misleading claims about a product's environmental credentials, has become commonplace with more demands for "green" versions of products. In a recent joint operation, officers from the Immigration & Checkpoints Authority (ICA) and Singapore Customs (SC) saw the phenomenon reach a new height of absurdity with a total seizure of 2,016 cartons of "eco-friendly tobacco".

2 On 24 November 2008 at about 0745 hrs, an inbound Malaysian-registered truck declared to be conveying disposable food containers and wrapping films pulled into Tuas Checkpoint and was directed for radiographic scanning. The officers found the scanned image to be inconsistent with the declared consignment.



**The seemingly innocuous consignment**

3 Sensing something amiss, the officers wasted no time and launched into a thorough inspection of the vehicle. They first uncovered packets of aluminium foil packed together with the disposable food containers in carton boxes. Interestingly, there were warning labels on the foil that cautioned against its removal as the contents were “environmentally-friendly” products that were prone to air contamination.



**WARNING: Do not remove foil or else...**

4 Paying no attention to the decoy labels, ICA officers continued with the un-stuffing process. Their efforts were rewarded when the officers retrieved duty-unpaid cigarettes in the cargo.

5 The male driver and his male assistant, aged 39 and 40 respectively, denied knowledge of the exhibits. The Malaysian Indian duo claimed that they were merely delivering the consignments to the various locations in Singapore as instructed by their logistics company.

6 SC officers were notified at about 0830 hrs and together with ICA officers, the authorities mounted a joint operation to escort the truck to a designated location in Woodlands. They further trailed it to a warehouse at Woodlands Link where more SC forces had already laid an ambush.

7 After the carton boxes were repacked and loaded onto two other Singapore-registered trucks, Customs officers moved in and arrested four Singaporean subjects, 3 males and 1 female, aged between 24 and 38. In the course of arrest, a 30 year-old Chinese male subject tried to flee but was swiftly apprehended by an ICA officer. The smugglers had attempted to evade duty and GST payable of \$141,926 and \$12,842 respectively.



**A foiled smuggling attempt by ICA and SC**

8 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.

9 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.

10 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 undesirable persons, drugs, weapons, explosives and other contraband into Singapore. 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.

**Issued by: Immigration & Checkpoints Authority and Singapore Customs**

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