



JOINT MEDIA RELEASE BY SINGAPORE CUSTOMS AND IMMIGRATION & CHECKPOINTS AUTHORITY

MAN FINED \$19,000 FOR SMUGGLING CIGARETTES THROUGH PARCEL POST

On 1 December 2008, Wang Zhong, a 23-year-old Chinese national, was sentenced by the Court to a fine of \$19,000 or in default seven weeks' imprisonment for smuggling 160 packets of cigarettes through parcel post. The duty and GST evaded amounted to over \$1,228.

2 On 3 November 2008, ICA officers at Parcel Post Station screened a parcel which had arrived in Singapore from Korea. The parcel was addressed to a Mr Wang Zhong of Paya Lebar. It was declared to contain foodstuff, but officers suspected that the contents were cigarettes instead. As a result of the detection of duty-unpaid cigarettes, the case was handed over to Singapore Customs for follow-up investigations.

3 Subsequently, on 29 November 2008, Singapore Customs officers initiated the delivery of the parcel to the addressee at Paya Lebar. Wang Zhong who claimed the parcel was immediately detained for questioning. Upon opening the parcel, 160 packets of duty-unpaid cigarettes were found packed inside the parcel. Wang Zhong was aware of the arrival of the parcel and admitted ownership of the cigarettes. Further investigations revealed that Wang Zhong had earlier arranged with his friend in Korea to send the cigarettes to him by post, thinking that he could bypass detection by declaring it as foodstuff. Wang Zhong was arrested and charged in Court. On 1 December 2008, he pleaded guilty to the charges and was fined by the Court \$19,000 or in default seven weeks' imprisonment.

4 Smuggling of cigarettes through parcel post is not new. There were 56 previous cases of using parcel-post delivery to smuggle duty-unpaid cigarettes since 2006 to date. All offenders were charged in Court or fined. A Singapore Customs spokesman said that as long as cigarettes are brought into Singapore regardless of the methods of import, duty and GST must be paid. Failure to do so is an offence. An ICA spokesman added that parcel post deliveries

are also subject to stringent checks to prevent unlawful items which compromise on Singapore's security to be imported. The authorities warned the public not to try their luck in using parcel post delivery methods to smuggle illegal items. Offenders will be severely dealt with.

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 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 \$500 or prosecution in Court.

6 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.

7 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.

**ISSUED BY: SINGAPORE CUSTOMS (新加坡关税局) (KASTAM SINGAPURA)
IMMIGRATION & CHECKPOINTS AUTHORITY (移民与关卡局)**

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The parcel arrived from Korea nicely wrapped.



Once the box is removed, the parcel is wrapped with aluminum foil, apparently to avoid being detected by screening machines.



A total of 160 packets of duty-unpaid cigarettes packed inside the parcel were seized.