



JOINT MEDIA RELEASE BY SINGAPORE CUSTOMS AND IMMIGRATION & CHECKPOINTS AUTHORITY

20,970 PACKETS CIGARETTES SMUGGLED UNDER LAYERS OF BRICKS, DRIVER JAILED TWO YEARS

A joint operation by Singapore Customs (SC) and Immigration & Checkpoints Authority (ICA) foiled a smuggling attempt using bricks to conceal illegal cigarettes on a trailer on 11 April 2009 at Tuas Checkpoint. A total of 20,970 packets of duty-unpaid cigarettes worth more than \$200,000 were seized. The driver of the vehicle, Selva Rajoo Kumarwell (Malaysian, aged 21) was charged in court and was sentenced to two years' jail. The duty and GST of the smuggled cigarettes amounted to more than \$161,000.

2 Singapore Customs obtained information that a Malaysia-registered prime mover would be smuggling duty-unpaid cigarettes into Singapore. A joint operation codenamed "Operation Bricklayer" was mounted with ICA to intercept the vehicle when it arrived at the Tuas Checkpoint at about 3 am on 11 April 2009. Inspection of the vehicle proved the information correct. Under the cover-load of bricks, ICA officers found a total of 20,970 packets of cigarettes hidden beneath the floorboard of the centre column of the trailer. Officers had to drill and pry open the centre column of the trailer's floorboard to expose the smuggled cigarettes. SC then took over the case for further investigations. The illegal cigarettes, bricks and the prime mover were all seized. The driver was arrested and was charged in court, where he pleaded guilty to charges on 13 April 2009 and was sentenced to two years' jail.

3 Investigations revealed that the driver was hired to smuggle cigarettes from Malaysia into Singapore using the Malaysian-registered prime mover. To avoid detection, the bricks were used as cover load to conceal the illegal cigarettes. If successful, the driver could have been paid RM 1,000 for the successful delivery.

4 In the first three months of 2009, a total of 298 offenders dealing with illegal cigarettes were arrested and charged in court. Convicted persons will have to face the consequences of the law – jail term and/or a fine of up to 20 times the duty and GST evaded.

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. 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, buyers may 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 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.

7 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.

**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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Trailer attached to the Prime Mover



Cover load of bricks removed



Top view of the modified floorboard of the trailer



Level view of the modified floor board



A total of 20,970 packets of illegal cigarettes were seized at the joint SC-ICA operation