



JOINT NEWS RELEASE BY IMMIGRATION & CHECKPOINTS AUTHORITY AND SINGAPORE CUSTOMS

LEAVING NO STONE UNTURNED

Of late, smuggling syndicates have been found to be shrouding their illicit businesses behind legitimate imports in their attempts to bootleg illegal items into the Republic. Regardless of the genuine import permit, never mind that it was a truckload laden with tons of granite - igneous, coarse stones - the Immigration & Checkpoints Authority (ICA) and Singapore Customs (SC) officers were determined to flush out any smuggling attempt as they leave no stone unturned, literally.

2 On 21 April 2009, the ICA and SC officers launched a joint operation at the cargo complex of Woodlands Checkpoint. At about 1709hrs, a lorry loaded with granite was sent for X-ray screening. Although the screening images were inconclusive, the officers were, however, unconvinced that there was nothing amiss about the truckload as the lone Malay driver appeared shifty and uneasy.



Stones, stones and more stones!

3 A body search on him uncovered a suspicious black plastic bundle in his rear jeans pocket. When opened, the bundle revealed a stack of 11 Ministry of Manpower (MOM) Work passes and a Singapore blue identity card believed to be forged. The cards seized also included six Safety Orientation Certificate (SOC) cards and 11 photocopies of bio-data page of foreign passports.



A black bundle of cards

4 When questioned, the 43-year-old Malaysian claimed that apart from delivering the granite, he was instructed by his employer, “Desmond”, to bring the bundle of cards into Singapore and hand them over to an unknown subject. For the additional task of bringing the work permit cards into Singapore, he was promised another RM200. He was instructed by Desmond to leave the lorry in the vicinity of Sungei Kadut for about two hours after he had delivered the granite.

5 In spite of the successful attempt in uncovering the counterfeit items, the officers were not convinced that lorry had the all clear to proceed to its intended venue for unloading. However, due to the difficulties in inspecting the granite, the lorry was escorted to the place of intended delivery, Sungei Kadut, to have its content emptied out. The lorry was then escorted back to Woodlands Checkpoint where the sharp-eyed officers noticed that the metal floor board was not consistent with the rest of the metallic materials of the lorry components.



Different materials, new-looking screws = Secret compartment

6 The suspicious-looking floorboard presented a smoother look, with its metal panels held in place by new screws. Sensing that there could be a hidden compartment beneath, officers removed the screws and pried open the metal panels. The arduous task finally revealed a secret compartment where duty-unpaid cigarettes were found neatly stacked within.



The illicit ciggies that lies beneath

7 A total of 14,500 packets of duty-unpaid cigarettes of various brands worth about \$131,000 were recovered and seized. The duty and GST involved is estimated to be \$111,215. The subject will be investigated by the Police and SC for possible offences under the Penal Code and the Customs and GST Acts. The suspected forged cards, contraband cigarettes and lorry were also seized by the relevant authorities.

8 SC 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. Vehicles used in the commission of such offences are also liable to be forfeited. The public is 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.

9 As Singapore's first line of defence against terrorist threats, the ICA has a duty to ensure the security and safety of Singapore. In a bid to enhance efficiency and effectiveness in cargo vehicle screenings, the ICA has deployed the new Integrated Cargo Inspection System (ICIS) at its border checkpoints to detect illicit items disguised as legitimate imports.

10 The ICA has also 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. The ICA would like to advise the public against smuggling unlawful goods into Singapore.

11 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 NEWS RELEASE

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

DATE: 27 APRIL 2009