



JOINT NEWS RELEASE

IMMIGRATION & CHECKPOINTS AUTHORITY AND SINGAPORE CUSTOMS

CAST IN STONE? NO WAY!

After the recent creative attempt to conceal illegal ciggies underneath a heap of granite, the syndicates are still pinning their hopes on stones, only this time, the material happens to be cement. It is really high time the smugglers realised that their success is never cast in stone, even when they try to seal their bootlegging efforts with the binding cement. The downfall of these smugglers simply underscores the fact that in spite of the enhanced checks at the checkpoints arising from the flu pandemic, the authorities will not let their vigilance down on border security.

2 Officers from the Immigration & Checkpoints Authority (ICA) and Singapore Customs (SC) uncovered a new modus operandi at Woodlands Checkpoint yesterday at about 1240 hrs, where a Malaysia-registered lorry conveying a cargo consignment of 200 pieces of pre-cast concrete road slabs was directed to the cargo checking bay for detailed checks.



An innocuous-looking consignment of concrete slabs

3 In the course of checks, officers off-loaded one of the concrete road slabs from the lorry and scanned it through the x-ray machine. The radiographic image showed anomalies in the density of materials. That was the cue for the officers to hack open the concrete road slabs.



An arduous task of retrieval

4 Eight hours later, the agencies' painstaking efforts were rewarded with a recovery of 3,000 cartons x 200 sticks of duty-unpaid cigarettes, with each slab concealing 15 cartons of illegal smokes wrapped with black plastic bags. The estimated street value of the duty-unpaid cigarettes is worth about \$288,000, with the duty and GST involved amounting to about \$230,310.



Cast in stone? Neh...

5 SC took over the case for further investigations. The contraband cigarettes and lorry were also seized by the authority. Upon conviction by the court, first time offenders can be fined up to 20 times the amount of duty evaded and liable to a jail term not exceeding three years. For second or subsequent convictions, offenders can be fined up to 40 times the amount of duty evaded and jailed for up to six years. The offenders also face further fines based on the amount of GST evaded. The lorry used in conveying this contraband will also be liable for forfeiture.

6 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.

7 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.

8 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.

9 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: 7 MAY 2009