



## Singapore Customs Media Release

### **YOUTH: CHUCK THOSE ILLEGAL CIGARETTES!**

In 2008, Singapore Customs booked 656 youth below the age of 18 years old with illegal cigarettes. This is marginally higher than the 649 underage youth (below 18 years old) caught in 2007. The prevalence of youth caught with illegal cigarettes remains a concern. Not only because cigarettes are harmful, underage youth caught with illegal cigarettes are also committing serious customs offences. Singapore Customs urges youth to chuck those illegal cigarettes, and live life the smoke-free way.

#### **Underage Youth Buyers and Smokers of Illegal Cigarettes**

2 In 2008, according to figures released by the Health Sciences Authority (HSA), there were 6,671 underage smokers. Singapore Customs caught 656 youths with illegal cigarettes in 2008, representing about 10 percent of the total number of youths caught smoking. Nonetheless, Singapore Customs is concerned that the availability of cheap illegal cigarettes on the streets would hamper the national effort to curb smoking. In the first four months of 2009, Singapore Customs booked 153 underage youth for having illegal cigarettes.

3 Singapore Customs adopts a consistent approach when dealing with underage youth offenders. Offenders would be fined a minimum of \$500 for every packet of cigarettes. Apart from heavy fines to serve as deterrence, Singapore Customs also emphasises the need for other corrective measures help to the youth. . For example, underage youth offenders first undergo a session of counseling by our officers to explain why an offence was committed and to advise them to stay away from illegal cigarettes. Subsequently, the offender will be referred to HSA for further action. Furthermore, Singapore Customs will also notify the parents or guardians and the school to ensure a collective approach to prevent a recurrence of the offence.

### **Spike in Peddling Activities among Underage Youth**

4 Peddling of illegal cigarettes among underage youth is a serious offence and is not taken lightly by Singapore Customs. . There was a spike in the number of underage youth caught peddling illegal cigarettes. From only two recorded in 2007, the number has risen to 11 in 2008. In the four months of 2009, two underage youth peddlers were caught. Singapore Customs is concerned that these young people, lured by the prospect of earning quick cash, may be exploited by syndicates to sell cigarettes. In the first five months of this year, Singapore Customs has recorded success crushing cigarettes syndicates, foiling 455 attempts in terms of cases and seizing 1.1 million packets of illegal cigarettes. Youth who are caught dealing with illegal cigarettes face the consequences of the law.

5 To illustrate, on 11 November 2008, a 17 year-old Singaporean was arrested for peddling illegal cigarettes at Geylang. He had five packets in his possession. The youth was charged in court and was fined \$5,200 or in default jail sentence of 52 days. In another case, on 25 July 2008, a 16 year-old boy was arrested for packing illegal cigarettes into carton boxes for distribution. He knew that the cigarettes were illegal but tempted by the prospect of earning \$300, he agreed to do the packing job. He was charged in court and sentenced to Reformatory Training Centre. The two cases illustrate how the involvement in illegal cigarettes has led these youth in their prime to lose their freedom. It is not worth it!

6 Singapore Customs is currently in discussion with other enforcement agencies and youth organisations to develop further preventive measures to tackle the issue of youth-related customs offences. In addition, Singapore Customs also conducts regular outreach sessions and talks at schools, community day events, foreign worker dormitories, companies as well as factories. These public education efforts will strengthen Singapore Customs' suppression and interdiction efforts on illegal cigarettes for a total enforcement strategy. Singapore Customs calls on all youth and public to join in the fight against illegal cigarettes.

### **World No Tobacco Day Roadshow 2009 to Engage Youth**

7 In conjunction with the 2009 World No Tobacco Day (WNTD), Singapore Customs is organising a roadshow at Bugis Junction from 29 to 31 May 2009 to raise the awareness of youth on the perils of illegal cigarettes. Singapore Customs understands that youth need to be made more aware of the issues concerning illegal cigarettes so that they become self-compliant with the law, and take it upon themselves to say NO to illegal cigarettes and smoking. Presented in an interactive and youth-centric manner to encourage youth participation, the roadshow also hopes to inculcate a spirit

of collective action in the fight against illegal cigarettes. More details of the WNTD roadshow can be found in the enclosed Annex.

8 The WNTD roadshow is the fourth-leg in a series of community engagement roadshows organised by Singapore Customs this year. Previously, roadshows have already been held at various heartland areas such as Tampines, Woodlands, Jurong and now Bugis.


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. 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 face a minimum fine of \$500 or prosecution in court.

10 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](mailto:customs_intelligence@customs.gov.sg).

**ISSUED BY: SINGAPORE CUSTOMS (新加坡关税局) (KASTAM SINGAPURA)**

**DATE: 30 MAY 2009**

## LET'S STAMP OUT ILLEGAL CIGARETTES TOGETHER

<p>Singapore Customs WNTD 2009 ROADSHOW @ BUGIS JUNCTION</p> <p><b>Friday 29 May</b>                      <b>11am - 2.30pm</b> <b>Sat &amp; Sun 30 - 31 May</b>      <b>11am - 6pm</b></p>	
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To commemorate World No Tobacco Day 2009 (WNTD), Singapore Customs (SC) will be holding a novelty roadshow at Bugis Junction.

Our key message this year is –

**Cigarettes in any form, and at any price, are not worth your life.**  
**Say No to illegal cigarettes! Stay smoke-free!**

**Show the truth. Picture warnings save lives.**

The World Health Organisation's theme for WNTD 2009 is "Tobacco Health Warnings", with an emphasis on the picture warnings that have been shown to be particularly effective at making people aware of the health risks of tobacco use and convincing them to quit.

In line with the theme, SC has set up a **larger-than-life cigarette stick** as the event's centrepiece. The huge cylindrical container will be packed with rubbish to literally depict the **RUBBISH** (poisons and chemicals) inhaled by smokers. The visual impact reinforces SC's key message for this year's WNTD.

There will also be another **cigarette feature structure** which will be filled with **genuine illegal cigarette sticks**. This is just a small pile of the millions seized by SC during raids on syndicates and illegal peddlers. Participants are invited to "count out" the number of sticks correctly and win attractive prizes.

Through these picture warnings, SC urges the public to join its fight to stamp out illegal cigarettes.

**Experiential Booth – Get a taste of being handcuffed!**

There will be an experiential booth at the roadshow to challenge participants to perform simple tasks while being handcuffed.

The handcuffs and activities visually drive home the harsh reality of losing precious freedom faced by offenders involved in illegal cigarettes.

For those interested to find out more about the local illegal cigarettes scene, they can take a look at an information exhibition panel. There will also be a slew of entertaining performances and exciting games to rally members of the public to be advocates for a smoke-free lifestyle.