



SINGAPORE CUSTOMS MEDIA RELEASE

SINGAPORE CUSTOMS SEIZED 100,000 PACKETS OF ILLEGAL CIGARETTES WORTH \$1 MILLION HIDDEN AMONG 473 TELEVISION SETS

On 29 July 2009, Singapore Customs successfully crushed another syndicated cigarette smuggling case at the Toa Payoh Industrial Park. A total of 100,000 packets of illegal cigarettes hidden among 473 sets of television were seized. Singapore Customs also arrested six men (three Singaporeans and three Malaysians (age 24 to 50 years old) suspected to be involved in the case. The cigarettes are estimated to be worth about \$1 million, with duty and GST involved amounting to \$767,560. The television sets and a Malaysian-registered lorry were also seized.

2 Singapore Customs officers trailed a lorry suspected to be conveying illegal cigarettes from Woodlands to Toa Payoh. At around 11.40am, officers observed that the lorry turned into the Toa Payoh Industrial Park. Officers continued to mount surveillance at the lorry. Half an hour later, officers witnessed six men removing boxes from the lorry. Officers moved in at this moment and declared office. Upon checking the lorry, officers found boxes containing 473 units of television sets, and hidden amongst these boxes were also boxes containing 100,000 packets of duty-unpaid cigarettes. All six men were arrested. Investigations into this case are currently ongoing.

3 This is the first time in 2009 that Singapore Customs uncovered television sets that are being used to conceal illegal cigarettes. Last year on 4 October 2008, a similar ruse was also employed where a total of 89,980 packets of illegal cigarettes were hidden inside 60 units of sub-woofer systems which had been hallowed out to conceal the loot.

4 Commenting on the successful interdiction of illegal cigarettes, Assistant-Director General of Customs (Investigation & Intelligence), Mr Lee Boon Chong (李文聰) said, "Singapore Customs will spare no effort to crush smuggling syndicates, and will continue to intensify

enforcement operations. No matter how “ingenious” smugglers are, our enforcement and intelligence will ultimately prevail. We warn offenders not to even consider taking a chance with us.”

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, offenders can be jailed as well as fined. The vehicles used in the commission of such offences 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, an offender may face a minimum fine of \$500 or prosecution in court.

6 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)
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A total of 100,000 packets of illegal cigarettes involving \$767,560 in duty and GST were seized in the operation.