



JOINT NEWS RELEASE

IMMIGRATION & CHECKPOINTS AUTHORITY AND SINGAPORE CUSTOMS

STICKY GLUEY CIGARETTES - HOW GOOD DOES IT TASTE?

The smugglers never give up. The painstaking efforts of welding, constructing secret compartments within the drums to disguise their smuggling attempt are signs of a more concerted effort to try to get through the tightly guarded borders.

2 On 22 Aug 2009, at about 0920 hours, a Malaysian-registered lorry was stopped at the Tuas Checkpoint for detailed checks. The 35-year old Malaysian driver claimed to be transporting some 36 drums of adhesive glue. Officers from the Immigration & Checkpoints Authority (ICA) and Singapore Customs (SC) proceeded to conduct the checks on the innocuous-looking consignment of drums.



An innocuous-looking consignment of drums

3 As part of the checks, the conveyance and cargo went through radiographic scanning. The officers were alerted to the anomalies in the scanning images and proceeded to conduct detailed physical checks on the drums. Their efforts paid off when they uncovered a specially constructed cylindrical compartment at the lower half of the drum while the top part of the drum had been filled with water. When the welded portion was pried open, contraband cigarettes were found hidden inside the secret compartment of the drum.



Contraband cigarettes hidden in the specially constructed compartment



Special compartment

4 The Malaysian driver was immediately placed under arrest. A total of 2,346 cartons x 200 sticks of contraband cigarettes were detected. The estimated street value of the duty-unpaid cigarettes is worth about \$234,000, with the duty and GST involved amounting to about \$180,000.



Exhibits seized

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)

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