



JOINT NEWS RELEASE

IMMIGRATION & CHECKPOINTS AUTHORITY AND SINGAPORE CUSTOMS

ARE YOU INTO PLASTIC SURGERY?

Plastic surgery is indeed becoming pervasive, as we see more people going under the knife for aesthetic or medical reasons. Do you know of friends who are considering such surgical procedures to enhance their appearance? Well, we do know of smugglers who use 'plastic surgery' creatively in a feeble attempt to fool the authorities. However, they seemed to have undermined the authorities' wits as our officers thwarted the unprecedented ruse at the Woodlands Checkpoint.

2 The latest modus operandi was uncovered by officers from the Immigration & Checkpoints Authority (ICA) and Singapore Customs (SC) on 29 September 2009 at noon time, where a Malaysia-registered lorry conveying a cargo consignment of plastic films was stopped for inspection at the Woodlands Checkpoint. The vehicle driven by a Malaysian man and accompanied by an attendant was directed to the radiographic scanner for checks.



The 'plasticky' consignment

3 Noting anomalies in the scanned images, officers off-loaded one box of the consignment from the lorry and sent the roll of packing film through the x-ray machine. The radiographic image again showed inconsistencies in the density of materials. That was the cue for the officers to cut up the rolls of plastic film, which was literally “plastic surgery”.



Plastic surgery of a different sort

4 The officers' painstaking efforts to cut up and remove the ingeniously-concealed contraband items were rewarded with a recovery of 17,280 packets of duty-unpaid cigarettes. Each of the 432 plastic rolls had concealed four cartons of illegal smokes. The estimated street value of the duty-unpaid cigarettes is worth more than \$170,000, with the duty and GST involved amounting to about \$122,000 and \$11,000 respectively.



'Restoring' the loot

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 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 sinister 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**) சிங்கப்பூர் சுங்கத்துறை

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