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SINGAPORE CUSTOMS
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Motorists Beware:
Jail Term Awaits For Tampering With Fuel Gauges
Another four hauled to court for turning deaf ears to authorities' warnings

Some motorists think that everyone should be sleeping in the wee hours of the morning and try their luck to get away with unlawful acts right under the nose of the authorities. Well, they will have to think twice – or even thrice – about this!

2 On 10 March 2010, our sharp-eyed, vigilant officers detected the almost inconspicuous modification of the fuel meter gauges of three vehicles – all within the span of one hour. The three men were arrested at the Woodlands Checkpoint. These failed attempts followed closely hot on the heels of a similar case which took place on 8 March 2010, involving a driving instructor. All have been sentenced to \$500 fine or in default one week jail, and two weeks' imprisonment.

He should have known better not to try his luck ...

3 Ten minutes to midnight on 8 March 2010, a Singaporean man, Zhang Jing Chuan (aged 35), was driving through the checkpoint at Woodlands when he was stopped by officers from the Immigration & Checkpoints Authority (ICA). When asked if the fuel gauge was tampered with, Zhang gave the officers an affirmative 'no' and confirmed further that his fuel supply was about three-quarter tank full.

4 The officers then conducted a body search on Zhang and found a remote control inside one of the pockets in his trousers. Realising there was no way out of the dire situation that he had trapped himself in, Zhang finally admitted to have tampered with the fuel gauge meter to create a false reading even when the fuel supply in his car was less than the stipulated quantity when leaving Singapore.

More motorists caught in 'fishy' acts in the wee hours at the checkpoint

5 On 10 March 2010, a spate of three similar cases took place within an hour, shortly after midnight, which resulted in the arrest of three men. The offenders were Tan Chong Jin James (Singaporean, aged 39), Yap Soon Heng (Singaporean Permanent Resident, aged 26) and Lee Hwa Ping (Malaysian, aged 36).

6 All four men were charged in court for not having the minimum amount of motor spirit in their vehicles' fuel tank when attempting to leave Singapore as required under the law, as well as for giving false information to the officers who inspected the fuel gauges. One by one, three of the offenders pleaded guilty with the last case involving Yap currently pending in court.

7 Since January 2010, 17 persons have been prosecuted for tampering with fuel gauges on their vehicles, with 10 persons convicted and jailed and fined. The remaining seven persons have their cases still pending in court.

8 Under the law, Singapore-registered cars must have at least three-quarter tank of petrol when departing Singapore. Motorists are advised against any attempts to infringe the rule when given the stringent checks at the checkpoints. Those who tamper with the fuel gauges of their vehicles to give a false reading that the amount of fuel in the fuel tanks are three-quarter full or more illustrate a deliberate intent to cheat the authorities. Such offenders are liable on conviction to fines not exceeding \$5,000 and/or jail term up to 12 months.

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