



IMMIGRATION & CHECKPOINTS AUTHORITY AND SINGAPORE CUSTOMS

JOINT NEWS RELEASE

LARGEST SINGLE SEIZURE OF CONTRABAND CIGARETTES FOR THE YEAR

It was a rhythmic ply and pry effort for the Immigration & Checkpoints Authority (ICA) officers at the Woodlands checkpoint, and Singapore Customs (SC) officers were again spot-on to fish out illegal trade through effective targeting. Whether two ply or three ply, the ICA and SC officers never failed to pry and uncover what lay beneath the layers. The laborious efforts paid off as they were rewarded with the largest single seizure of contraband cigarettes for this year!

2. On Tuesday, 20 April 2010 at about 3.45pm, a Malaysia-registered lorry which was carrying 789 pieces of plywood arrived at the Woodlands Checkpoint. During a routine check, the observant ICA officer noted anomalies in the scanned images of the goods and directed the driver to the inspection pit for a more thorough check.



The innocuous-looking lorry carrying the loot

3. Upon lifting a corner of the plywood, ICA officers discovered that the interior of the plywood was a hollow compartment filled with the duty-unpaid cigarettes. Preliminary investigations revealed that the 31-year old Malaysian Malay driver had loaded the consignment of cargo at Rawang, Selangor and drove the consignment to his office located at Johor. He parked the lorry with the consignment of plywood in his company overnight. The following day, he collected the import permit and was told to deliver the consignment to Sungei Kadut in Singapore. He would receive RM125 for the delivery.

4. It was certainly a sweet rewarding experience for the officers as they made the largest recovery of 9,791 cartons or more than 1.96 million sticks of duty unpaid cigarettes for this year. The estimated street value of the duty-unpaid cigarettes was worth \$979,100. The duty and GST evaded amounted to about \$689,290 and \$62,370 respectively. SC arrested the driver and seized contrabands as well as the lorry for further investigations.



Contraband cigarettes hidden in the plywood

5. 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 vehicles 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. Our borders are our first line of defence in safeguarding Singapore's security. The enhanced security checks are critical to our nation's security. We have tightened our security checks on passengers and vehicles at the checkpoints to prevent attempts to smuggle in undesirable persons, drugs, weapons, explosives and other contrabands.

8. 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: IMMIGRATION & CHECKPOINTS AUTHORITY (移民与关卡局)
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