



JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

SINGAPORE CUSTOMS AND IMMIGRATION & CHECKPOINTS AUTHORITY

TISSUES, ROLLS AND “BUTTS” KICKED ...

**Another smuggling ploy foiled by authorities
6 men arrested, 34,750 packets of contraband cigarettes seized**

What looks like an ordinary consignment of tissues, toilet rolls, paper serviettes and cotton buds is in fact a guise for smuggling 34,750 packets of contraband cigarettes worth over \$300,000! Fortunately, the officers from Singapore Customs (SC) and Immigration & Checkpoints Authority (ICA) were able to see through the smugglers' ploy. The attempt by six men - five Malaysians and one Singaporean - to try to conceal contraband cigarettes amongst a mix of different paper products ended badly with their arrests for alleged involvement in smuggling contraband cigarettes into Singapore.

2 The day was 28 July 2010 and it was business as usual in the morning at a flatted factory complex near Depot Close. At 8.20am, a 40-foot Malaysian-registered blue bonded truck drove into the loading/unloading bay, followed shortly by a Singapore-registered white lorry. The lorry driver parked his vehicle nicely beside the blue truck. Soon, four men appeared and quickly but discreetly launched into action at the bay area.

3 As the four men opened the side door of the Malaysian truck's cargo compartment and busied themselves with unloading innocuous-looking boxes and packages, they were totally oblivious to the Customs officers keeping watch at a secluded corner of the factory compound. Little did they know that SC had worked hand-in-hand with ICA to target the Malaysian-registered bonded truck suspected to be carrying illegal cigarettes from Malaysia into Singapore. Officers had kept the truck under close monitoring and trailed the bonded truck all the way to the flatted factory complex near Depot Close. Officers had been observing the four men, later established to be Malaysians, loitering near the bay. Once both vehicles were parked next to each other, the hard work of unloading by the men began.

4 The carton boxes with markings indicating paper tissues, toilet rolls and cotton buds, were stacked neatly on the ground. Subsequently, boxes without any markings on them were being carried out from the centre of the cargo compartment of the blue truck and transferred into the local lorry. Once the unmarked boxes had been completely loaded, the four men then re-loaded the blue truck with the carton boxes.

5 At this juncture, Customs officers moved in and arrested the four men and two drivers. Stunned by the unexpected move of our officers, the six men were apprehended and later brought away by the officers for further investigations. All were charged in court on 6 August 2010. Five of them pleaded guilty on 10 August 2010 while court proceedings for the remaining man are still ongoing.

6 The syndicated members had thought they could smartly piggyback on the paper loads to avoid detection by the authorities and smuggle their contraband cigarettes into Singapore. Once again, SC and ICA officers have proven them wrong by successfully foiling another smuggling attempt and put a stop to duty and GST evasion totalling more than of \$260,000!

[Please see photographs of the crime scene and contraband cigarettes in [Appendix 1.](#)]

7 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. Cigarettes without 'SDPC' marking are illegal and 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.

8 As Singapore's first line of defence against terrorist threats, ICA has a duty to ensure the security and safety of Singapore. ICA has tightened security checks on passengers and vehicles at the checkpoints to prevent attempts to smuggle in undesirable persons, drugs, weapons, explosives and other contraband. 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

**ISSUED BY: SINGAPORE CUSTOMS
KASTAM SINGAPURA**

新加坡关税局
சிங்கப்பூர் சுங்கத்துறை

IMMIGRATION & CHECKPOINTS AUTHORITY
移民与关卡局

DATE: 12 AUGUST 2010



Cargo compartment of Malaysian truck was opened from the side so that unmarked boxes containing contraband cigarettes could be removed from the centre of the compartment



Singapore lorry parked next to Malaysian truck



Unmarked boxes of cigarettes transferred into Singapore lorry



Customs officers unloaded boxes and packages of paper tissues, toilet rolls and cotton buds used as coverload from Malaysian truck



34,750 packets of contraband cigarettes worth over \$300,000 in street value seized