



Singapore Customs Media Release

CIGGIES ALERT: CIGARETTE BRAND “MOON MOUNTAIN” IS ILLEGAL IN SINGAPORE

Innovation is the ‘*in*’ thing for smugglers nowadays. With their thinking caps on, smugglers are constantly coming up with new ideas to get around the laws and regulations in place. Alas, that’s only wishful thinking on their part!

Moon Mountain Cigarettes – Contraband In Full Disguise!

2 Recently, Singapore Customs (SC) has observed an increasing release of a particular brand of illegal cigarettes into the black market. Cigarettes bearing the brand “Moon Mountain” are currently not supplied by any local tobacco importer or wholesaler licensed by the Health Sciences Authority (HSA). SC’s investigations have revealed that the cigarettes have been smuggled into Singapore by syndicates. The “Moon Mountain” cigarettes resemble legitimate cigarettes of other brands in that they come in packets showing the usual pictorial health warning.



Cigarettes bearing the “Moon Mountain” brand are illegal in Singapore

3 SC has been keeping a close tab on the syndicated smuggling activities involving “Moon Mountain” cigarettes. Based on intelligence gathered, SC mounted an operation in March 2011 which resulted in the seizure of 32,000 packets of duty-unpaid cigarettes, with 16,500 packets being “Moon Mountain” cigarettes. The total duty and GST evaded was almost \$300,000. Four men – three Singaporeans and one Chinese national – were arrested for alleged smuggling of the cigarettes. Two locally registered vehicles were also seized in the operation.

Fast And Furious Car Chase – Futile Attempt to Escape

4 On 11 March 2011, Customs officers kept watch on a bonded truck suspected to be loaded with duty-unpaid cigarettes in the Woodlands area. At about 7.15 pm, four men were spotted, together with the targeted truck and a gold-coloured Nissan Sunny. Midway through their illicit transactions, officers moved in and arrested the men.

5 The Chinese national, who was earlier seen receiving the loot, resisted the arrest and tried to flee. One of the Singaporean men quickly drove off in his Nissan Sunny towards the Bedok Reservoir. A heated car chase ensued. The man made two illegal U-turns and in his desperation and panic to get away from the officers, he suddenly found himself ended up on the wrong side of the road, with his only route of escape blocked by an on-coming public bus. Dejected, he gave in and surrendered to our officers.

6 Two of the men will be charged in court on 18 March 2011, with the Chinese national facing two additional charges for overstaying in Singapore and assault. Investigations for the other two men are still ongoing. [Please see case photographs in APPENDIX I]

Advisory from Singapore Customs

7 SC warns that “Moon Mountain” cigarettes are illegal in Singapore and members of the public should not buy or be in possession of this particular brand of cigarettes. When in doubt about the legality of cigarettes, i.e. whether they are duty-paid or duty-unpaid, the public may contact the Singapore Customs Hotline at 1800-2330000 or email to customs_intelligence@customs.gov.sg.

8 SC also urges the public to only purchase cigarettes and other tobacco products from registered retailers licensed by the HSA. Under the Tobacco (Control of Advertisements and Sale) Act, it is an offence for any person to sell tobacco products without a retail licence.

9 Buying, selling, conveying, delivering, storing, keeping, having in possession or dealing with duty-unpaid goods are serious offences under the Customs Act and the GST Act and will be severely dealt with. Offenders can be fined up to 20 times the amount of duty evaded and/or jailed. The vehicles used in the commission of such offence are also liable to be forfeited. For possessing a packet of duty-unpaid cigarettes, buyers may face a composition sum of \$500 or prosecution in court. To report illegal cigarette activities, members of the public may call the Singapore Customs Hotline at 1800-2330000 or email to customs_intelligence@customs.gov.sg.

**ISSUED BY: SINGAPORE CUSTOMS
KASTAM SINGAPURA**

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சிங்கப்பூர் சுங்கத்துறை

DATE: 21 MARCH 2011



Targeted bonded truck loaded with cartons of contraband cigarettes



Customs officers uncovered a total of 32,000 packets of duty-unpaid cigarettes