



SINGAPORE CUSTOMS MEDIA RELEASE

NEW CONCEALMENT TACTICS FOR CONTRABAND CIGARETTES: L-PLATE CAR AND 'SMOKING' PLANTS

9 men and 1 ex-Customs offender arrested in latest Geylang raid

Ever seen 'smoking' plants before? Well, these were uncovered in the latest raid in Geylang conducted by Singapore Customs (SC), together with the Singapore Police Force and the Immigration & Checkpoints Authority, on 6 April 2011. Officers caught 10 men for their alleged involvement in illegal cigarettes activities and unveiled new secret hideouts for duty unpaid cigarettes: a potted plant with a modified compartment and inside a L-plate car.

2 One Singaporean man (aged 35, Chinese) and nine Vietnamese men (aged between 22 and 34) were arrested. A total of 130 packets of duty-unpaid cigarettes were seized, with duty and Goods & Services Tax (GST) exceeding \$1,000.

Potted plants – More than just that

3 Based on intelligence gathered, Customs officers were keeping watch at Lorong 6 Geylang in the evening on 6 April 2011. Soon, the Singaporean man was seen approaching a flower pot placed along a walkway. He lifted the plant to retrieve some packets of cigarettes and sell them to passers-by.

4 Investigations revealed that the man had ingeniously stuck soil and plants onto a thin circular piece of cardboard in the flower pot and pass it off as a normal-looking potted plant. As he had been convicted previously for offences under the Customs Act, the Singaporean man is liable for enhanced punishment.

L-plate cars – For learners?

5 While the Singaporean man was arrested for peddling his loot out of a flower pot, a Vietnamese man was caught for allegedly involved in illegal cigarette activities as well. Officers keeping watch nearby spotted the man walking hurriedly towards a L-plate car parked along Geylang Road with a suspicious-looking brown bag in his hand. Officers then moved in just as he was getting into the car. During the check, duty-unpaid cigarettes were found both in the bag and in the car.

6 Further investigations established that the man had been engaged by an unknown fellow Vietnamese to hide the bag of cigarettes in the car as the latter had got wind of police presence in the vicinity.

7 Eight other Vietnamese were also caught for suspected peddling activities in the four-hour operation.

[Please see photographs of the potted plants and the L-plate car in [Appendix 1](#).]

8 Singapore Customs warns that 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. Repeat offenders can be fined up to 40 times the amount of duty evaded and/or jailed for up to six years. 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.

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

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Appendix1



Seemingly normal-looking potted plant



Duty-unpaid cigarettes concealed in a modified compartment of the potted plant



L-plate car used for the storage of duty-unpaid cigarettes



Duty-unpaid cigarettes found in the L-plate car