



Singapore Customs Media Release

WE ARE WATCHING YOU! **Authorities' raid led to arrest of 8 Indonesian peddlers at Woodlands Road**

8 Indonesians, consisting of 7 males and 1 female, were arrested in a joint operation conducted by Singapore Customs (SC), Gurkha Contingent, Singapore Police Force (SPF) and Immigration & Checkpoints Authority (ICA) on 28 June 2011. A total of 338 packets of illegal cigarettes were seized. The total duty and Goods and Services Tax (GST) involved exceed \$2,000 and the estimated street value of the cigarettes is more than \$3,000 in this operation.

2 Yew Tee has been an area of concern for contraband activities as a strong presence of buyers continues to support peddling activities there. These cigarettes were being sold to approaching passers-by at the vicinity of Yew Tee Industrial Estate along Woodlands Road by suspected immigration offenders, at \$5 per packet, which is less than half the price of legal, duty-paid cigarettes sold in retail outlets. Thus, to rid the area of these illegal activities, a joint operation was launched on 28 June 2011.

3 Enforcement officers raided the area at about 10 pm and caught the peddlers by surprise. While some of the cigarettes were hidden in the forested area nearby, others were thrown on the floor by the peddlers while trying to escape from the officers. The 8 Indonesians arrested during the 1.5 hour operation were between 21 to 39 years of age. The female accused person, who was working as a domestic helper in Jurong, was also wanted for a Police offence committed previously. Of the 7 male Indonesians arrested, 5 were immigration offenders and 2 were overstayers.

4 SC takes illegal cigarettes activities seriously and regular enforcement actions are being taken at the Yew Tee area. In addition, SC has also deployed auxiliary police officers to strengthen enforcement resources to curb the situation. These officers support SC officers in daily patrols to increase enforcement presence in the area. As many peddlers turned out to be immigration offenders, SC also works closely with other law enforcement agencies to our enforcement efforts. From January to June this year, SC has conducted 5 major operations, during which 25 peddlers and 35 buyers were caught. During the raids, their make-shift homes were also destroyed to prevent them from returning to the forested area.

5 Earlier on 16 June 2011, during a regular patrol at Yew Tee, officers arrested a taxi driver who had stopped by the roadside to purchase duty-unpaid cigarettes from an unknown peddler. The driver, a 51 year old Singaporean male, turned out to be a third time Customs offender. He had committed previous Customs offences in 2007 and 2009, and was imposed with hefty composition

sums. However, he was not so lucky the third time. He was prosecuted in Court and was sentenced to a fine of \$1,200 or, in default, 6 days' imprisonment.

6 Motorists who stopped by the roadside illegally to purchase contraband cigarettes from peddlers pose as traffic hazards and endanger road safety. Hence, these offenders would face additional penalties from the Traffic Police, on top of their Customs offences.

7 As part of its ongoing public education programme, SC has conducted about 76 outreach activities this year, including roadshows and other publicity drives in heartland areas, factories, schools and companies. We recognise that public support and involvement are important to enhance our enforcement effectiveness.

8 SC takes a serious view on contraband activities and is monitoring the situation closely. SC 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 and GST evaded and/or jailed for up to six years. For every packet of illegal cigarettes, buyers will be compounded for at least \$500.

9 Members of the public are encouraged to stay vigilant and to report any information on smuggling activities or evasion of Customs duty or GST, to the Singapore Customs Hotline at 1800-2330000 or email to customs_intelligence@customs.gov.sg.

ISSUED BY: SINGAPORE CUSTOMS

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KASTAM SINGAPURA

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DATE: 5 JULY 2011

Appendix



Resting Area for Peddlers



Make shift tent with mattresses and disposed items



Total exhibits



8 Indonesian accused persons arrested