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MEDIA RELEASE

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Singapore Customs foils importer's attempt to smuggle soil into Singapore

A company manufacturing uniforms thought it could get away with smuggling over 800 bags of soil into Singapore among its usual consignment of declared goods like textile material and umbrellas.

What it did not know was that Singapore Customs officers were tracking its "suspicious" consignment that was being shipped from Huangpu, China, to Singapore.

Singapore Customs worked with the Immigration & Checkpoints Authority to interdict the 20-foot container as it was about to be imported through the Tanjong Pagar Gate on 22 Aug 2012.

A total of 823 26-litre bags of soil commonly used for growing plants were found in the container.

The entire consignment of soil was seized. The Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority of Singapore (AVA) is currently investigating the case.

The import of soil into Singapore is regulated under the Control of Plants Act – Plant Importation Rules.

Under the Act, the import of soil must be covered by a valid import permit issued by the AVA. A phytosanitary certificate from the exporting country certifying that the soil is free from any plant parasitic nematodes and plant pests is also required.

Plant parasitic nematodes are harmful microscopic worms in soil that can affect the growth of plants as the majority of these nematodes feed on the underground parts of plants such as the roots, bulbs and tubers.

The import permit and phytosanitary certificate requirements are to prevent the introduction of plant parasitic nematodes and plant pests into Singapore.

Anyone who fails to comply with these requirements can be fined up to \$10,000 and/or jailed up to three years.

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ANNEX

Photos of the Consignment of Soil Smuggled into Singapore



A total of 823 26-litre bags of soil were found in the 20-foot container.



A total of 823 bags of soil were recovered from the container and seized by the Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority of Singapore.

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