



SINGAPORE CUSTOMS 新加坡关税局 **KASTAM SINGAPURA** சிங்கப்பூர் கங்கத்துறை

MEDIA RELEASE

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Singapore Customs disrupts contraband cigarette syndicate

In an operation in September 2012, Singapore Customs successfully disrupted a contraband cigarette syndicate that used several prime-movers and vans to transport contraband cigarettes from a storage facility in the western part of Singapore for distribution to various locations island-wide.

Eight men were arrested in this operation and a total of 4,000 cartons and 5 packets (40,005 packets) of duty-unpaid cigarettes worth more than \$400,000 were seized. The total duty and Goods and Services Tax (GST) evaded exceeded \$330,000.

On 3 September 2012 evening, Singapore Customs officers were watching keenly as multiple boxes were transferred from three prime-movers to three vans in a car park for heavy vehicles at Pioneer Road. Suspecting the boxes to contain duty-unpaid cigarettes, the officers trailed the vehicles, which fanned out in different directions. One of the vans, driven by Chia Willy, was later intercepted in Woodlands, and 1,000 cartons of contraband cigarettes were found in the vehicle.

Over the next hour, the prime-movers, driven by Suparman Bin Padio, Mohammed Fared Bin Mohammed Mozaini and Azman Bin Abdul Rahman, returned to the storage facility twice to transport more boxes of contraband cigarettes to the car park, where Tan Heng Leong and another man assisted to carry the boxes to the two vans.

The vehicles then left the car park, heading in different directions. In order to nab all the men involved, Singapore Customs officers split into different teams, which intercepted the vehicles in various parts of the island, including Sunset Way and Upper Changi.

The syndicate latched on to the idea of using prime-movers to transfer the cigarettes to the vans as the prime-movers would look “empty” without the trailers attached. The men hid the boxes of contraband cigarettes in the space behind the driver’s seat in the prime-movers.

Investigations established that Suparman was the coordinator. He recruited the other drivers to deliver the contraband cigarettes from the storage facility to the heavy vehicle car park, and to distribute the cigarettes island-wide. As Suparman was a repeat offender, he received the enhanced punishment under Section 128L(5A) of the Customs Act. He was sentenced to three years' jail and a court fine of \$10 million or in default three years' jail. His sentence was the heaviest handed down by the court since the enhanced punishment was implemented in January 2012.

Tan Heng Leong was sentenced to one year's jail and a court fine of \$3.6 million or in default two years' jail. The other four men received jail sentences ranging from 15 months to 3 years.

Investigations are still ongoing for the other two men involved in the syndicate.

The three prime-movers and three vans were seized.

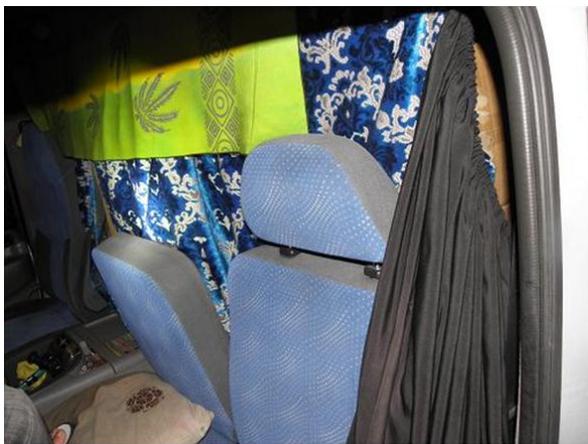
Buying, selling, conveying, delivering, storing, keeping, having in possession or dealing with duty-unpaid goods are serious offences under the Customs Act and the GST Act. Offenders will be severely dealt with and can be fined up to 40 times the amount of duty evaded and/or jailed for up to six years.

The minimum court fine for first-time and repeat offenders of tobacco-related offences is \$2,000 and \$4,000 respectively. Repeat offenders who are caught with more than two kilogrammes of tobacco products will also face mandatory imprisonment.

Members of the public with information on smuggling activities or evasion of Customs duty or GST should contact the Singapore Customs hotline on 1800-2330000 or email customs_intelligence@customs.gov.sg

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ANNEX – PHOTOS



Boxes of contraband cigarettes were found hidden in the space behind the driver's seat in the three prime-movers.



Boxes of contraband cigarettes recovered from one of the vans.

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