



**SINGAPORE CUSTOMS
AND
IMMIGRATION & CHECKPOINTS AUTHORITY**

JOINT NEWS RELEASE

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Four men sentenced to between 34 and 36 months' jail for their involvement in contraband cigarettes

Four Malaysian men were sentenced by the court on 13 January 2014 to between 34 and 36 months' jail for their involvement in contraband cigarettes.

The four men were arrested on 11 January 2014 by Singapore Customs officers. A total of 14,999 cartons of contraband cigarettes valued at S\$1.4 million were seized. The duty and Goods and Services Tax evaded exceeded S\$1.1 million. This is the third largest seizure of contraband cigarettes since 2009.

Singapore Customs and the Immigration & Checkpoints Authority (ICA) worked together to conduct checks on a 40-foot container when it arrived at the Tanjong Pagar Scanning Station on 10 January 2014. The checks revealed duty-unpaid cigarettes hidden in 16 pallets of board partitions.

Singapore Customs officers kept a close watch as the pallets were transported to a warehouse at Soon Lee Street. They saw three men – Mogan Ayawoo, 37; Kasidesan Ramasantiran, 26; and Manirajan Abimanan, 25 – moving the pallets into a unit.

The officers moved in and raided the unit. They found 14,999 cartons of duty-unpaid cigarettes concealed in specially constructed hollow spaces beneath pieces of board partitions in the pallets. The three men were arrested.

The fourth man, Thiru Chelvam A/L Krishnasamy, 33, who was the ringleader of the group, was subsequently arrested. Investigations revealed that Thiru had sought the assistance of the other three men to move the contraband cigarettes into the unit. Thiru was sentenced to three years' jail. The other three men were each sentenced to 34 months' jail.

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

The minimum court fine for first-time and repeat offenders of tobacco-related offences are \$2,000 and \$4,000 respectively. Repeat offenders who are caught with more than two kilogrammes of tobacco products will also face mandatory imprisonment. Vehicles used in the commission of such offences are also liable to be forfeited.

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

Our borders are our first line of defence in safeguarding Singapore's security. The security checks are critical to our nation's security. ICA will continue to conduct our security checks on passengers and vehicles at the checkpoints to prevent attempts to smuggle in undesirable persons, drugs, weapons, explosives and other contrabands. The same methods of concealment used by contraband smugglers may be used by terrorists to smuggle arms and explosives to carry out attacks in Singapore.

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ANNEX



The duty-unpaid cigarettes were concealed in specially constructed hollow spaces beneath the stacks of board partitions. (Photo: Singapore Customs)



Duty-unpaid cigarettes were found concealed in the hollow spaces beneath pieces of board partitions. (Photo: Singapore Customs)



A total of 14,999 cartons of duty-unpaid cigarettes were seized in this operation. (Photo: Singapore Customs)

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