



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

MEDIA RELEASE

4 June 2014

Singapore Customs busts contraband cigarette distribution ring in Opera Estate

Five Chinese work permit holders involved in distributing contraband cigarettes were arrested in Opera Estate on 31 May 2014 in an operation by Singapore Customs.

A total of 394 cartons and 35 packets of duty-unpaid cigarettes worth more than \$42,300 were seized. The duty and Goods and Services Tax (GST) evaded exceeded \$33,800. A Singapore-registered private bus was also seized.

Based on a tip-off received, Singapore Customs officers kept a close watch along Swan Lake Avenue on 31 May 2014 afternoon. At about 2.50pm, the officers spotted Miao Wei, 39, driving a bus into Swan Lake Avenue and coming to a halt at Fidelio Street.

After he stopped the engine, Miao and his passenger, Xu Renfeng, 29, removed five canvas bags from the bus. The duo carried the bags to a terrace house at the adjoining Ernani Street and handed the bags to Wang Guangzhen, 26, who rented a room in the house.

The officers moved in to arrest the three men. They recovered 250 cartons of duty-unpaid cigarettes from the canvas bags, and 30 cartons and two packets from the bus.

The officers also raided the terrace house and arrested another two tenants, Guo Peiyong, 26 and Shi Zhenyuan, 24. The two men had a total of 53 cartons and 18 packets of duty-unpaid cigarettes in their rooms. Another carton and 10 packets of duty-unpaid cigarettes were also found in Wang's room.

Xu's rented room in another terrace house nearby at Aida Street was raided next, and 60 cartons and five packets of duty-unpaid cigarettes were recovered from his room.

Investigations established that Wang had ordered the duty-unpaid cigarettes from Xu, who recruited Miao to deliver the cigarettes using his company's bus. Wang had intended to sell the contraband cigarettes at a profit.

For their involvement in contraband cigarette activities, Guo and Shi were sentenced to four months' jail and a court fine of \$5,800 (or in default 20 days' jail) respectively. Court proceedings are ongoing for the remaining three men.

"Singapore Customs takes a serious view of foreigners who get involved in illegal contraband cigarette activities," said Mr Lim Guan Cheong, Head of Suppression and Community Engagement, Singapore Customs (新加坡关税局反走私与社区参与处处长林

元璋). “We will not hesitate to clamp down on such illegal activities and bring offenders who contravene Singapore’s laws to justice.”

“We would also like to advise people who rent out their rooms to tenants to remain alert, and ensure that their tenants are not using their rented rooms to store contraband cigarettes,” said Mr Lim. “Also, we remind companies to watch their drivers to ensure that they do not use company vehicles for illegal activities.”

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. 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

###

ANNEX



Miao Wei used his company's bus to transport duty-unpaid cigarettes to Opera Estate.



More than 280 cartons of duty-unpaid cigarettes were recovered from the canvas bags and the bus.



Duty-unpaid cigarettes stored in the canvas bags.



More duty-unpaid cigarettes were recovered from the bedrooms rented by the work permit holders.

###