



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

MEDIA RELEASE

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More foreign workers getting involved in duty-unpaid cigarette activities to earn money on the side

More foreign workers are getting involved in duty-unpaid cigarette activities to earn money on the side.

These foreign workers usually post advertisements on social media platforms such as Shi Cheng BBS (獅城BBS) and WeChat to look for work during their free time. They are then hired by illegal cigarette syndicates to deliver duty-unpaid cigarettes. Some of these foreign workers also use their employer's vehicles to deliver the duty-unpaid cigarettes.

In the first six months of 2016, nine foreign workers were caught for being involved with duty-unpaid cigarettes. Another 12 were caught in the second half of the year.

In one such case, a male Chinese national was arrested on 9 December 2016 for being involved with duty-unpaid cigarettes. The 36-year-old had posted an advertisement on the social media platform QQ to look for work during his free time. He was subsequently hired by an unknown person via the platform to take delivery of a consignment containing duty-unpaid cigarettes hidden in display stands at a company building in Tuas.

A total of 2,409 cartons of duty-unpaid cigarettes were seized in this case. The duty and Goods and Services Tax (GST) evaded amounted to about \$186,940 and \$18,820 respectively. Investigations are ongoing.

In another case, two male Chinese nationals – Chen Jie, 35, and Zheng Chao Lin, 23 – were sentenced by the State Courts on 14 November 2016 for being involved with duty-unpaid cigarettes. Chen was sentenced to four months' imprisonment and a fine of \$1,250. Zheng was sentenced to four months' imprisonment and a fine of \$1,000.

Investigations revealed that Chen was engaged by Zheng to deliver duty-unpaid cigarettes during his free time. Chen used his employer's van to deliver the duty-unpaid cigarettes.

More than 1,873 cartons of duty-unpaid cigarettes were seized in this case. Some of these duty-unpaid cigarettes were found hidden in consignments of play mats. The duty and GST evaded amounted to about \$145,380 and \$14,630 respectively. The company van that was used by Chen to deliver duty-unpaid cigarettes was also seized.

In the same month, another 28-year-old male Chinese national was arrested, on 3 November 2016, for dealing with duty-unpaid cigarettes. A total of 799 cartons of duty-unpaid cigarettes, hidden within a consignment of soldering devices, were seized. The duty and GST evaded amounted to about \$62,000 and \$6,240 respectively.

Investigations revealed that the man had posted an advertisement on Shi Cheng BBS in search of work during his free time, and he was subsequently offered a job – to collect and deliver duty-unpaid cigarettes. Investigations are ongoing.

“Foreign workers looking to earn extra money on the side through illicit activities should be fully aware of the consequences,” said Mr Yeo Sew Meng, Assistant Director-General (Intelligence and Investigation), Singapore Customs [新加坡关税局助理局长(情报与调查)杨秀明].

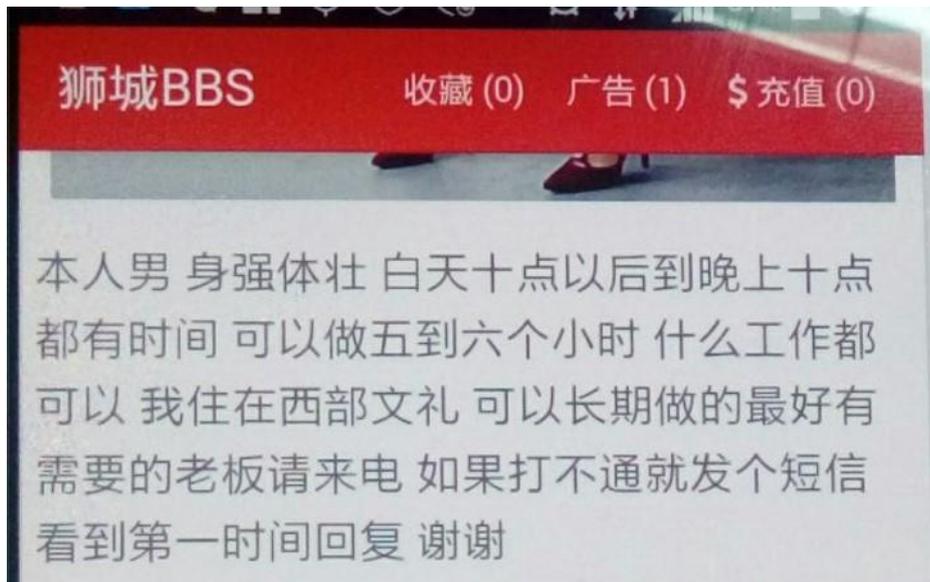
“If they are caught for being involved in such illegal activities, they will be prosecuted and their work pass will be revoked, and they will be repatriated after they have fulfilled their sentence,” said Mr Yeo.

“We urge employers who allow their workers to drive company vehicles outside working hours to closely monitor the use of the vehicle by their employees,” added Mr Yeo. “This will help to prevent company vehicles from being misused for illegal activities, and avoid any inconvenience and financial loss to the vehicle owners.”

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.

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.

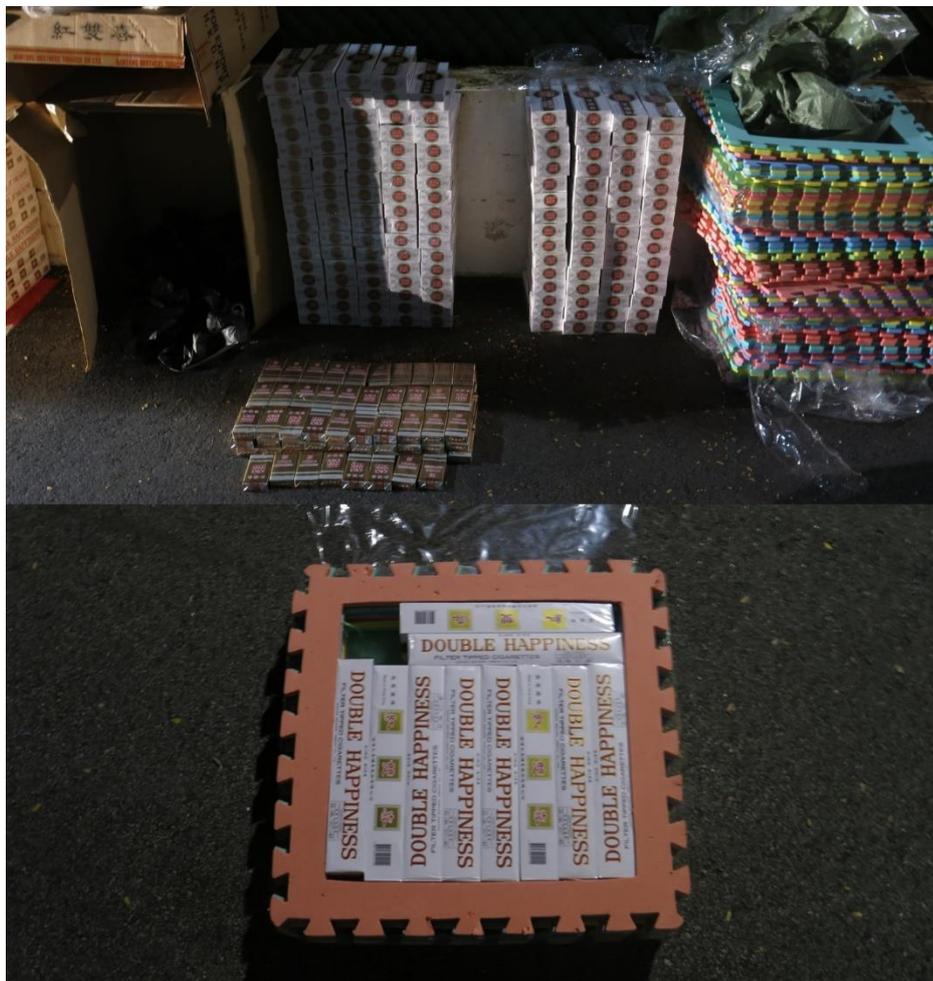
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Screenshots showing examples of advertisements posted by foreign workers looking for work during their free time on social media platforms such as Shi Cheng BBS (狮城 BBS).



A total of 2,409 cartons of duty-unpaid cigarettes, hidden in display stands, were seized in the case involving the 36-year-old male Chinese national.



More than 1,873 cartons of duty-unpaid cigarettes were seized in the case involving Chen and Zheng.



The van belonging to Chen's employer, used to deliver duty-unpaid cigarettes, was also seized.



A total of 799 cartons of duty-unpaid cigarettes, hidden within a consignment of soldering devices, were seized in the case involving the 28-year-old male Chinese national.

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