



SINGAPORE CUSTOMS 新加坡关税局 KASTAM SINGAPURA சிங்கப்பூர் கங்கத்துறை

MEDIA RELEASE

7 February 2019

Caught in 2018: 25 drivers lured by online advertisements to smuggle duty-unpaid cigarettes into Singapore

Twenty-five drivers lured by online advertisements to smuggle duty-unpaid cigarettes into Singapore were caught in 2018.

The online advertisements on social media platforms such as Facebook and WeChat typically offer a payment ranging between \$100 and \$600 for every smuggling trip into Singapore.

The 25 drivers caught were sentenced by the State Courts to imprisonment terms of between 10 weeks and six months. The vehicles, which included cars and vans with modified compartments, used to smuggle the duty-unpaid cigarettes into Singapore were seized.

In a recent case, Singaporean Law Hwa Peng, 45, was sentenced by the State Courts on 21 January 2019 to 20 weeks' imprisonment for smuggling duty-unpaid cigarettes into Singapore.

Law came across a Facebook advertisement offering a high payment for drivers. He responded to the advertisement and was offered \$400 for every trip to smuggle duty-unpaid cigarettes from Malaysia into Singapore. Law accepted the offer and he was provided a car, which he drove into Malaysia for duty-unpaid cigarettes to be loaded into various modified compartments of the vehicle. Law attempted to drive the car into Singapore on 16 November 2018 but he was arrested at the Woodlands Checkpoint.

A total of 144 cartons and 1,143 packets of duty-unpaid cigarettes were found in the car. The duty-unpaid cigarettes and the car were seized. The duty and Goods and Services Tax (GST) evaded amounted to about \$22,050 and \$1,610 respectively.

In another case, a 25-year-old Malaysian, Ku Kai Chien, responded to a Facebook post advertising for drivers, and he was engaged to drive his own van into Malaysia for the syndicate to load duty-unpaid cigarettes onto the vehicle. He was asked to drive the van back to Singapore and if he succeeded in smuggling the cigarettes, he would be paid \$400.

However, Ku was arrested at the Tuas Checkpoint on 21 March 2018. A total of 201 cartons and 790 packets of duty-unpaid cigarettes were found concealed in various modified compartments of the van. The duty-unpaid cigarettes and the van were seized. The duty and GST evaded amounted to about \$23,910 and \$1,750 respectively. Ku was sentenced by the State Courts on 9 July 2018 to six months' imprisonment for smuggling duty-unpaid cigarettes into Singapore.

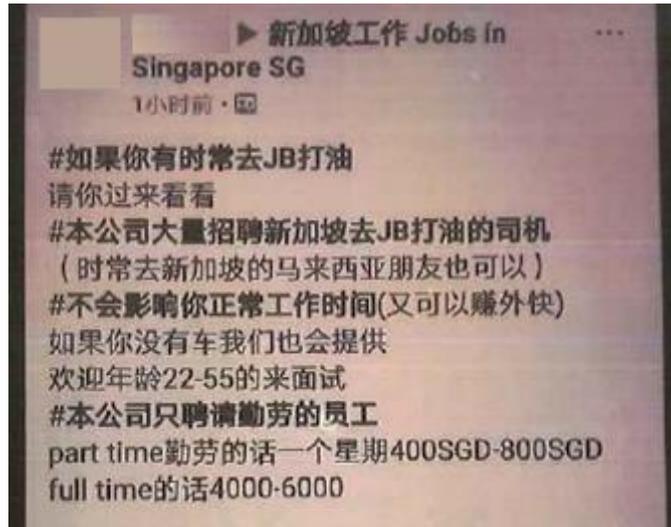
“Drivers who are hoping to make easy and quick money from the syndicates by smuggling duty-unpaid cigarettes into Singapore should think twice. They will end up paying a higher price when they are caught,” said Assistant Director-General (Intelligence & Investigation) Yeo Sew Meng [新加坡关税局助理局长(情报与调查)杨秀明]. “We strongly advise the public not to fall prey to such online advertisements. We will take firm actions against those who respond to these advertisements to smuggle duty-unpaid cigarettes into Singapore.”

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 can be fined up to 40 times the amount of duty and GST evaded and/or jailed for up to six years. Vehicles used in the commission of such offences are also liable to be forfeited.

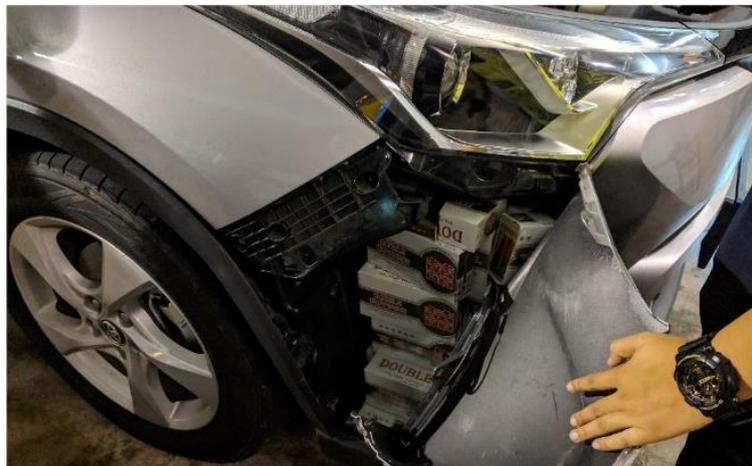
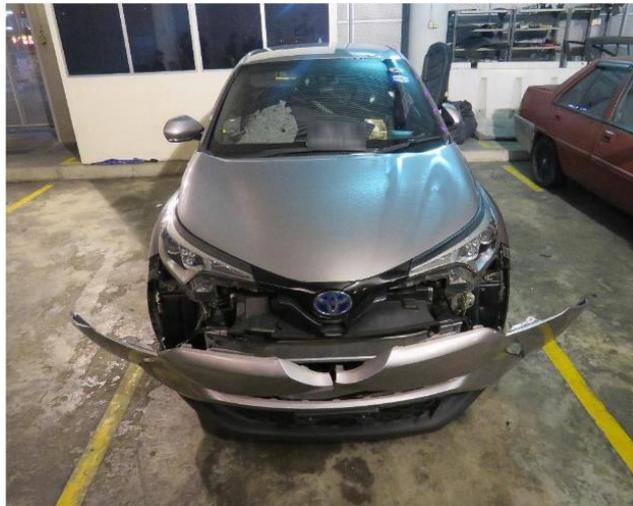
Members of public with information on smuggling activities or evasion of Customs duty or GST can call the Singapore Customs hotline on 1800-2330000, email customs_intelligence@customs.gov.sg or use Customs@SG mobile app (which can be downloaded from the Apple Store or Google Play) to report these illegal activities.

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ANNEX

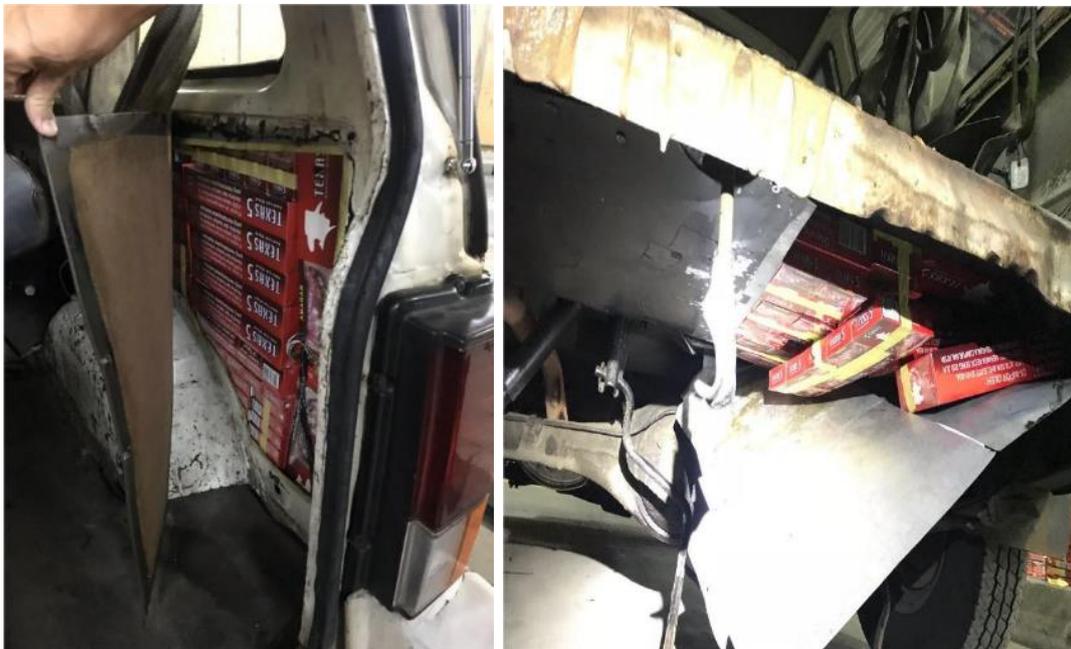


A Facebook advertisement recruiting drivers to smuggle duty-unpaid cigarettes from Malaysia into Singapore.





Law responded to an advertisement on Facebook to smuggle duty-unpaid cigarettes from Malaysia into Singapore. He was arrested at the Woodlands Checkpoint on 16 November 2018. 144 cartons and 1,143 packets of duty-unpaid cigarettes were found in the car he was driving.





Ku was arrested at the Tuas Checkpoint on 21 March 2018 when he tried to smuggle 201 cartons and 790 packets of duty-unpaid cigarettes, concealed in various modified compartments of his van, into Singapore.

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