

"YOU CONCEAL, WE REVEAL" - SINGAPORE CUSTOMS AND IMMIGRATION & CHECKPOINTS AUTHORITY EXPOSE ANOTHER SMUGGLING RUSE

Singapore Customs (SC) and Immigration & Checkpoints Authority (ICA) conducted two joint operations on 15 and 20 November 2007, which resulted in the seizure of about 60,000 packets of duty-unpaid cigarettes worth over \$500,000.

2 On 20 November 2007, SC and ICA crushed a case of a smuggling syndicate using industrial carpets to conceal contraband cigarettes. Officers raiding a warehouse at Tagore Lane found 15 rolls of 3.5 metre long carpets. Unrolling the carpets revealed a cylindrical hollow stashed with cartons of contraband cigarettes. A total of 44,960 packets of duty-unpaid cigarettes were concealed within the hollowed-out parts of the carpet rolls. One Malaysian man aged 28 years old was arrested. The duty and GST evaded amounted to \$344,840 and the value of the duty-unpaid cigarettes is estimated to be \$404,000. The man pleaded guilty in court on 21 November 2007 and was sentenced to a total of 36 months' imprisonment for the offences committed.

3 This is the first time that duty-unpaid cigarettes have been found stashed within carpet rolls. Commenting on the recent joint operations, Mr Lee Boon Chong, Assistant Director-General of Customs (Intelligence and Investigations) said, "We will not condone any smuggling activities which compromise the integrity of the trading system. We have successfully stepped up enforcement efforts to pursue and crush these syndicates, even as they develop new methods of concealment".

4 In the earlier case on 15 November 2007, the officers seized 15,000 packets of duty-unpaid cigarettes worth about \$135,000 from a secret compartment under the metal floorboards of a tour bus. Five syndicate members (four Singaporeans and one Malaysian), aged between 43 and 55 years were arrested. The duty and GST on the seized cigarettes amounted to \$115,000.

5 Singapore Customs warns that buying, selling, conveying, delivering, storing, keeping, having in possession or dealing with contraband cigarettes are serious offences under the Customs and GST Acts. Stiff penalties are imposed for such offences. On conviction by the Court, offenders can be jailed as well as fined. The vehicles used in the commission of the offence are also liable to forfeiture. The public is also advised against buying duty-unpaid cigarettes. For a packet of duty-unpaid cigarettes, buyers stand to face a minimum fine of \$500 or prosecution in Court.

6 As Singapore's first line of defence against terrorist threats, ICA has a duty to ensure the security and safety of Singapore. ICA has tightened security checks on passengers and vehicles at the checkpoints to prevent attempts to

smuggle in undesirable persons, drugs, weapons, explosives and other contraband. 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. ICA would like to advise the public against smuggling unlawful goods into Singapore.

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

**ISSUED BY: SINGAPORE CUSTOMS AND
IMMIGRATION & CHECKPOINTS AUTHORITY**

DATE: 27 NOVEMBER 2007

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