



**A SMUGGLING SYNDICATE SMASHED –
4 ARRESTED AND 54,000 PACKETS CIGARETTES SEIZED**

Singapore Customs officers smashed a smuggling syndicate – four male Singaporeans (aged 27, 34, 37 and 38) arrested and 5,400 cartons (or 54,000 packets) duty-unpaid cigarettes seized – in a covert operation on 16 Feb 2006. The estimated market value of the contraband cigarettes is \$486,000 and the total duty and GST payable is \$404,460.

2 Acting on intelligence gathered, Customs officer trailed a car and a covered lorry suspected to be conveying duty-unpaid cigarettes from the Changi Air Cargo Terminal on 16 Feb 2006 at about 6.00 am. Officers intercepted the vehicles when they were slowing down at the traffic junction of Airport Road and Hougang Avenue 3. Four men who were in the vehicles were detained for questioning. Later, upon checking the lorry, officers found 5,400 cartons of duty-unpaid cigarettes.

3 The goods were imported by air from Malaysia and were fraudulently declared as 'Buddha statues and accessories'. The cigarettes were meant for distribution to factories, construction sites and dormitories of foreign workers. The men will be charged in court on 17 Feb 2006 for offences committed under the Customs Act.

4 Singapore Customs warns that the storing, possession, conveying or dealing with any contraband cigarettes are serious offences under the Customs Act. First time offenders can be fined up to a maximum of 20 times the amount of duty evaded. For the second and subsequent convictions, offenders can be jailed for up to 2 years, as well as being fined. The offenders also face further fines based on the amount of GST evaded.

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

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