

JOINT PRESS RELEASE

SIX NABBED IN ICA – SINGAPORE CUSTOMS JOINT OPERATION

On 14 August 2006 at about 0515 hours, ICA conducted a joint operation with Singapore Customs (SC) at a 2-storey shop house at Lorong Tahar. A man identified as a supplier of contraband cigarettes was arrested during the operation and 1,842 cartons of duty-unpaid cigarettes were seized. During the operation, an additional four immigration offenders and their harbourer were also arrested.

2 During the operation, officers rushed into the house on the second floor and saw a man trying to escape by leaping out of the window. The Singaporean man landed on a stationary lorry. His fall was cushioned by the filled trash bags on the lorry. However, his desperate escape attempt was thwarted by officers stationed on the ground floor to cut off all possible escape routes. The 52-year-old man was escorted back to his room where officers recovered a total of 1,842 cartons of contraband cigarettes kept in brown cardboard boxes. He admitted that the duty-unpaid cigarettes were meant for his customers who were mainly Indonesian and Bangladeshi nationals. The estimated market value of the cigarettes is over \$165,000. The total duty and GST payable is about \$138,300.

3 At the same time, four male immigration offenders and their Singaporean harbourer were found and arrested in another room in the shop house. The immigration offenders were all Indian nationals aged 26 to 40. They claimed that they each pay a monthly rent of \$110 to the 46-year-old Singaporean man. The four immigration offenders and their harbourer were handed over to Police for further investigation.

4 Singapore Customs warns that the storing, possession, conveying or dealing with any contraband cigarettes are serious offences under the Customs Act. Singapore Customs takes a serious view of any attempt to evade duty and tax and will not hesitate to prosecute offenders in court. The public are advised against buying even small quantities of duty-unpaid cigarettes for their own consumption. Buyers and consumers of duty-unpaid cigarettes stand to pay a composition of \$200 per packet.

5 Members of the public with information on any illegal activities involving duty-unpaid cigarettes are encouraged to contact the Customs toll-free hotline on 1800-2330000.

6 ICA takes a serious view of attempts by foreigners to overstay or enter Singapore illegally. Under the Immigration Act (Cap 133), the penalties for overstaying or illegal entry are a jail term of up to six months plus a minimum of three strokes of the cane.

7 ICA would also like to remind the public that it is an offence to offer shelter and employment to immigration offenders. Homeowners can make use of ICA's online checking system, called "VERIFI" (or Verification of Foreigner Immigration Status) to verify the immigration passes of their prospective tenants. VERIFI can be accessed through ICA's internet website: <http://www.ica.gov.sg> and allows users to receive an instantaneous reply on the validity of the immigration passes presented to them. Similarly, MOM has a system to

allow the checking on the validity of work passes at its website: <http://www.mom.gov.sg>. Everyone has a part to play in keeping Singapore safe and secure. We urge members of public with information regarding immigration offenders to call ICA at Tel: 1800-391 6150 or contact the Police.

Jointly Released by Singapore Customs and ICA
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