

SINGAPORE CUSTOMS MEDIA RELEASE

ILLEGAL PEDDLER SENTENCED TO 10 MONTHS' JAIL

On 28 April 2008, a 43-year-old Singaporean Tang Wah Hee was sentenced to a total of 10 months' imprisonment (eight months for the offence under the Customs Act and two months for the GST offence) for offences involving six packets of duty-unpaid cigarettes. This is the highest sentence so far taking into consideration the quantity of the cigarettes involved.

2 On 10 January 2008 at about 5pm, Singapore Customs officers keeping watch in the vicinity of Geylang for illegal cigarette peddling activities, saw a Chinese man approaching Tang outside unit number 260 Geylang Road. The man picked up a packet of cigarettes from the chair beside Tang and handed over some money to the latter. The officers then approached Tang. On seeing the officers, Tang asked one of them if he had wanted to buy cigarettes. There were six packets of cigarettes on the chair. Tang was arrested, and the cigarettes seized.

3 Tang was charged in court for offences under the Customs and GST Acts. Tang had earlier been convicted for similar offences in August last year. He was arrested for peddling illegal cigarettes and was sentenced to six months' imprisonment. In view of his earlier offences, Tang was liable for enhanced punishment under Section 130(1)(ii) of the Customs Act for the offences committed on 10 January 2008. Under the Customs Act, for second or subsequent convictions, offenders can be jailed for up to 2 years, as well as being fined. On 28 April 2008, the Court sentenced Tang to a total of 10 months' imprisonment - eight months for the offence under the Customs Act and two months for the GST offence. The sentences were to run concurrently.

4 Singapore Customs takes a serious view of the sale and distribution of contraband cigarettes and will continue to monitor the situation closely. Storing, keeping or having in possession, conveying or dealing with any duty-unpaid cigarettes are offences under the Customs Act. Stiff penalties are imposed for such offences. Upon conviction by the Court, first time offenders can be fined up to a maximum of 20 times the amount of tax evaded. For second or subsequent convictions, offenders face enhanced punishment of imprisonment of up to two years, as well as being fined.

5 Members of the public with information on peddling of contraband cigarette should contact the Singapore Customs Hotline at 1800-2330000 or email to customs_intelligence@customs.gov.sg.

END OF RELEASE

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