



SINGAPORE CUSTOMS MEDIA RELEASE

NEW CIGARETTE SMUGGLING METHOD USING DECORATIVE ROMAN PILLARS UNCOVERED, TWO MEN ARRESTED

Singapore Customs uncovered a new cigarette smuggling attempt using decorative plaster Roman pillars to hide 54,000 packets of cigarettes worth about \$0.5 million. Two Singaporean men (aged 48 and 49 years old) were arrested. The duty and GST of the smuggled cigarettes amounted to \$415,000.

2 On 13 August 2008 at about 12.50 pm, Singapore Customs officers mounted a surveillance operation at a warehouse unit at Tagore Lane. Two men were seen pushing a pallet of brown boxes out from a store. Suspecting that the goods were duty-unpaid cigarettes, the officers moved in and stopped the men. The officers were proved correct – a check of the boxes revealed 10,000 packets of duty-unpaid cigarettes. The men were immediately placed under arrest. Using the keys retrieved from the two men, officers opened the door to the store. In the store were piles of debris and broken pillars and balls as well as stacks of brown carton boxes. There were several pallets of intact decorative plaster Roman pillars and huge cement-like balls. Another 44,000 packets of cigarettes were found stuffed inside when the intact pillars and balls were hacked open. The two men were charged in Court on 15 August 2008. They pleaded guilty to the charges and were both sentenced by the Court to 3 years' imprisonment.

3 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, offenders can be jailed as well as fined. The vehicles used in the commission of such offence are also liable to be forfeited. The public are strongly advised not to buy duty-unpaid cigarettes. For possessing a packet of duty-unpaid cigarettes, an offender may face a minimum fine of \$500 or prosecution in court.

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

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Cigarettes hidden within the decorative pillars



More contraband cigarettes exposed when the pillars were hacked open



The hollow spaces within the pillars provide hiding spaces for the illegal cigarettes



The cement-like balls contain smuggled cigarettes



A total of 54,000 packets of duty unpaid cigarettes were seized from the operation