



Singapore Customs Media Release

“SNOW WHITE” AND THE SIX OFFENDERS

6 men arrested and over 32,000 packets worth \$338,000 seized in Customs' latest crackdown on contraband cigarettes syndicates

Singapore Customs (SC) successfully interdicted an attempt by a syndicate to bring in 32,704 packets of contraband cigarettes on 20 January 2010. A two-day operation resulted in six syndicate members being arrested – two Singaporeans and four Bangladeshis, aged between 29 and 43 - and the seizure of a car and a lorry. The cigarettes seized were worth \$337,812 and the total duty and GST involved amounted to \$285,563.

Just an Ordinary Container Truck? More than meets the eye ...

2 On 19 January 2010, officers from SC and the Immigration & Checkpoints Authority (ICA) mounted a joint operation on a targeted container trucked from the Pasir Panjang Port. The truck was let in through the checkpoint and subsequently trailed by SC officers to a defunct company along Sungei Kadut Street 3.

3 One day later, a white lorry arrived and parked beside the container truck outside the defunct company. Subsequently, four Bangladeshi men arrived at the location and were spotted transferring innocuous-looking boxes from the container to the back of the lorry. Once all the boxes were unloaded from the container, the lorry immediately drove off with four men in it.

The hot trail continues ...

4 Customs officers continued to trail the lorry to Jalan Asas where two syndicate members were waiting in a parked car - a local gold-coloured Proton Waja - in the carpark beside Railway Mall. The two men got out from the car and helped the four Bangladeshi men unload some of the boxes from the lorry into the car, before carrying the remaining boxes into a rented unit inside a single storey terrace house. Later, one of the men stayed back to tend to the boxes in the store, while the rest left the place separately in the car and lorry to Bishan and Benoi Sector respectively.

Action-Packed Customs Operation – Violence, Sweat and more ...

5 At the carpark of Block 182 Bishan Street 13, Customs officers intercepted the car, moved in and declared office to the driver and passenger. The driver tried to escape by repeatedly reversing and ramming the car into two of Customs' patrol vehicles. Officers broke the glass window of the car, pulled out the two men and pinned them down onto the ground. The two men were later established to be a 43-year-old Singaporean Chinese taxi driver, and Karim, a 43-year-old Bangladeshi shipyard worker.

6 At the same time, another team of Customs officers had trailed the lorry to No. 2 Benoi Sector. Similarly, the three men in the lorry put up a fierce resistance to officers' attempts to arrest them, but the tenacity of the officers resulted in them being subdued and arrested. They were later established to be Mohd Khalid Bin Bonod, a 43-year-old Singaporean Malay driver and two Bangladeshis - Gopal, a 40 year-old construction worker and a 36 year-old construction worker. The man who remained at the store in Jalan Asas (Golam, a 29-year-old Bangladeshi shipyard worker) was also subsequently arrested by Customs officers.

7 In this operation codenamed "Op Snow White", Customs officers found a total of 32,704 packets of contraband cigarettes in the store at Jalan Asas and the car. To avoid detection, the syndicate members had painstakingly concealed small pockets of cigarettes underneath thick layers of wet plaster within each box, instead of optimizing the space by filling up every box to the brim with more cigarettes. Such elaborate and meticulous ways of hiding the contraband cigarettes have been the trend among syndicates observed by SC since last year.

8 All the six persons were charged on 25 January 2010. The Malay driver and 3 Bangladeshis have been convicted and sentenced to 9 to 12 months' imprisonment. Court proceedings are still in progress for the Singaporean Chinese driver and a Bangladeshi

[Please see pictures for "Op Snow White" in [Annex 1](#).]

Advisory from Singapore Customs

9 Singapore Customs warns that buying, selling, conveying, delivering, storing, keeping, having in possession or dealing with duty-unpaid goods are serious offences under the Customs and GST Acts and will be severely dealt with. Offenders can be fined up to 40 times the amount of duty evaded and/or jailed for up to six years. 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 products. For possessing a packet of duty-unpaid cigarettes, buyers may face a minimum fine of \$500 or prosecution in court.

ISSUED BY: SINGAPORE CUSTOMS 新加坡关税局
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Pictures for “Op Snow White”



Container with Boxes



Boxes found in the unit at Jalan Asas



Boxes retrieved from car seized



Retrieval of contraband cigarettes from the boxes. Every box contained 15 cartons.



Total quantity of contraband cigarettes seized - 37,204 packets x 20 sticks of assorted duty unpaid cigarettes