



SINGAPORE CUSTOMS 新加坡关税局 KASTAM SINGAPURA சிங்கப்பூர் கங்கத்துறை

MEDIA RELEASE

6 May 2016

Four Chinese nationals jailed for peddling contraband cigarettes on WeChat

A 26-year-old Chinese national was sentenced by the State Courts on 4 May 2016 to five months' imprisonment for peddling contraband cigarettes.

Zhang Daolong was selling contraband cigarettes via the instant messaging platform WeChat. Singapore Customs officers arrested Zhang as he was leaving his rented room in an apartment in Lorong 28 Geylang on 28 April 2016. More than 235 cartons of contraband cigarettes were seized in this operation. The amount of duty and Goods and Services Tax (GST) evaded exceeded \$20,110.

Zhang was one of the four Chinese nationals nabbed by Singapore Customs in the last seven weeks for peddling contraband cigarettes on WeChat.

One of these WeChat cases involved a married couple. Ma Feng, 32, and Zhang Qiuping, 33, were sentenced by the State Courts on 14 April 2016 to 12 weeks' imprisonment each for their involvement in contraband cigarette activities.

The couple had set up WeChat accounts to attract potential buyers for their contraband cigarettes. Ma was in charge of liaising with contraband cigarette suppliers while his wife, Zhang, liaised with and delivered the contraband cigarettes to their buyers.

Zhang was arrested by Singapore Customs officers in Woodlands Avenue 6 on 12 April 2016 when she was delivering contraband cigarettes to buyers. Her husband was arrested when the officers raided the couple's rented room in an HDB flat in Woodlands Ring Road. More than 67 cartons of contraband cigarettes were seized in this operation. The amount of duty and GST evaded exceeded \$5,720.

In another case, Liu Huawen, 33, was sentenced by the State Courts on 14 March 2016 to three months' imprisonment and a fine of \$9,200 or in default two months and two weeks' imprisonment. Liu was arrested by Singapore Customs officers on 11 March 2016 when he was delivering contraband cigarettes in Jurong West Street 62. The officers then raided Liu's rented room in an HDB flat nearby. More than 94

cartons of contraband cigarettes were seized in this operation. The amount of duty and GST evaded exceeded \$8,050. Investigations revealed that Liu had sourced for suppliers and buyers of contraband cigarettes via the WeChat platform.

“We are keeping a close watch on such illegal activities on WeChat and other social media platforms,” said Mr Yeo Ban Meng, Head of Suppression and Community Engagement, Singapore Customs (新加坡关税局反走私与社区参与处处长杨万铭). “Offenders will be severely punished in accordance with the law.”

Buying, selling, conveying, delivering, storing, keeping, having in possession or dealing with duty-unpaid goods are serious offences under the Customs Act and the GST Act. Offenders will be severely dealt with. They can be fined up to 40 times the amount of duty and GST evaded, and/or jailed for up to six years.

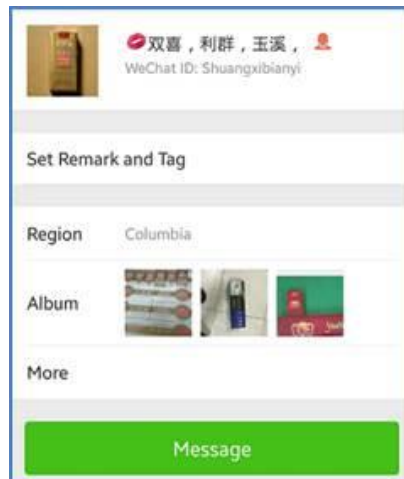
The minimum court fine for first-time and repeat offenders of tobacco-related offences is \$2,000 and \$4,000 respectively. Repeat offenders who are caught with more than two kilogrammes of tobacco products will also face mandatory jail sentences.

“We urge members of the public to report to Singapore Customs any suspected contraband cigarette activities they come across on instant messaging platforms, and help us to stop such criminal activities from taking place in their neighbourhood,” said Mr Yeo.

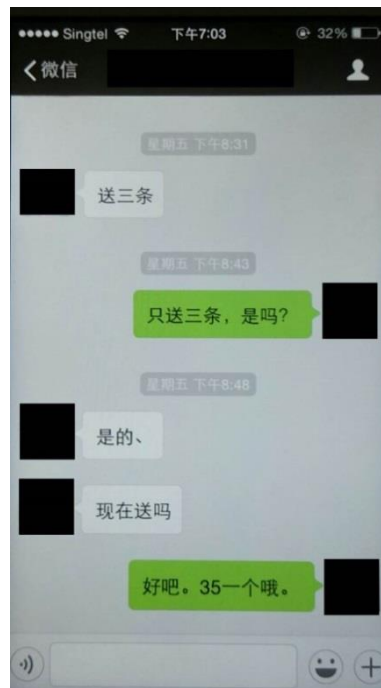
Members of the public with information on smuggling activities or evasion of Customs duty or GST can call the Singapore Customs hotline on 1800-2330000, email customs_intelligence@customs.gov.sg or use Customs@SG mobile app (which can be downloaded from the Apple Store or Google Play) to report these illegal activities.

###

ANNEX



A screen shot of Zhang Daolong's WeChat status, with photos showing the contraband cigarettes he was selling.



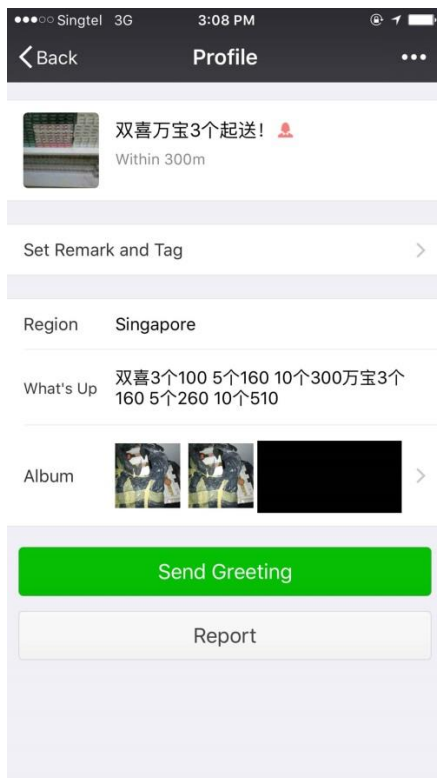
A screen shot of a WeChat conversation between Zhang Daolong and one of his potential customers.



More than 235 cartons of contraband cigarettes were seized from Zhang Daolong's rented room in Lorong 28 Geylang.



Some of the contraband cigarettes seized from Ma and Zhang's rented room in an HDB flat in Woodlands Ring Road.



Screen shots of Liu's WeChat status.



Contraband cigarettes found in Liu's haversack. He was on the way to deliver these contraband cigarettes when he was stopped by Singapore Customs officers.

###