



MEDIA RELEASE

Immediate

2 February 2024

SEVEN MEN ARRESTED FOR DEALING WITH DUTY-UNPAID CIGARETTES AND LIQUOR THROUGH SOCIAL MESSAGING PLATFORMS

Singapore, 2 February 2024 – Singapore Customs actively monitors social messaging platforms and online shopping platforms in our relentless pursuit to curb the illicit trade of duty-unpaid cigarettes. Singapore Customs conducted an operation at Jurong West Street 81 on 16 January 2024, after noticing sales of duty-unpaid cigarettes being advertised on a social messaging platform.

2 During the operation, our officers uncovered 68 cartons of duty-unpaid cigarettes in a truck's cargo compartment and cash amounting to \$3,290. The cash found was allegedly the proceeds collected from the sales of duty-unpaid cigarettes. The driver, a 42-year-old male Chinese national, was arrested, and the duty-unpaid cigarettes, cash and truck were seized. The total duty and Goods and Services Tax (GST) evaded amounted to around \$7,369.

3 Investigations revealed that the driver was allegedly engaged by an unknown person via WeChat to deliver duty-unpaid cigarettes. He was driving his company's truck to deliver duty-unpaid cigarettes at Jurong West Street 81 when officers intercepted him. Court proceedings are ongoing against the driver.

4 After the operation at Jurong West Street 81, officers pursued leads from the arrest culminating into a two-week long sting which ended with the arrest of six persons with a total of 15 cartons, 16 packets and 48 sticks of duty-unpaid cigarettes seized. The duty and GST evaded amounted to about \$3,992. Another six bottles of duty-unpaid liquor were also seized from one of the offenders.

5 Out of the six persons who had been arrested during the follow-up operations, two of them were convicted in court and sentenced to fines of \$2,600 and \$8,900 on 22 January 2024 and 29 January respectively. Court proceedings are on-going against two other persons and the remaining two persons are under investigations.

6 Buying, selling, conveying, delivering, storing, keeping, possessing or dealing with duty-unpaid goods are serious offences under the Customs Act and the GST Act. Offenders can be fined up to 40 times the amount of duty, and GST evaded and/or jailed for up to six years. Vehicles used in the commission of such offences and proceeds of sales of duty-unpaid cigarettes are also liable to be forfeited.

7 Members of the public with information on smuggling activities or evasion of duty or GST can provide information to Customs at <https://go.gov.sg/reportcustomsoffence>.

Annex A: Photos of the operation

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About Singapore Customs

Singapore Customs, a lead agency under the Ministry of Finance, protects revenue and facilitates trade. We make trade easy, fair and secure. We ensure compliance with customs regulations and collect taxes and duties on dutiable and taxable goods. We regulate the export of strategic goods and implement Singapore's commitments to some international trade regulations such as the United Nations Security Council Sanctions.

We work closely with other government agencies, industry partners, and international organisations in our mission and operations. With the use of data analytics, digitalisation of processes and various technologies, we continuously improve the efficiency and effectiveness of customs processes.

By proactively balancing the intricate requirements of trade facilitation, security and regulatory compliance, Singapore Customs strengthens Singapore's position as a global trade hub trusted by businesses operating in Singapore and foreign trading partners.

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ANNEX A



The duty-unpaid cigarettes found in the truck at Jurong West Street 81.



Seized cash suspected to be proceeds from the sales of duty-unpaid cigarettes found in the truck at Jurong West Street 81.



Duty-unpaid cigarettes found hidden behind the bed of one of the arrested individuals.



Duty-unpaid cigarettes and duty-unpaid liquor found concealed in luggages belonging to another arrested individual.