



SINGAPORE CUSTOMS

MEDIA RELEASE

**“FROM TOPS TO BAGS” –
FOUR MEN ARRESTED AND OVER 39,500 PACKETS
DUTY-UNPAID CIGARETTES SEIZED IN
SINGAPORE CUSTOMS STING OPERATION**

On 10 July 2007, officers from Singapore Customs, in a series of sting operations, arrested four Singaporean men (aged 17 to 52) and seized a total of 39,504 packets of duty-unpaid cigarettes estimated to be worth over \$459,000. The duty-unpaid cigarettes were deviously concealed in laminated table *tops* and repacked into nylon *bags* for delivery. The evaded duty and GST of the seized cigarettes amounted to \$392,000. Also seized was one van used in the delivery of the contraband cigarettes.

2. On 10 July 2007 at about 1300 hours, Customs officers kept watch at the vicinity of Jurong West Ave 1 for a delivery van suspected of conveying contraband cigarettes. Half an hour later at about 1330 hours, the targeted delivery van arrived at the car park in Jurong West Avenue 1. Customs officers intercepted the van. Upon opening the rear cargo compartment of the van, Customs officers found 11,500 packets of duty-unpaid cigarettes concealed in nylon bags. The driver of the van was arrested.

3. Officers then interrogated the suspect and investigations revealed that he had collected the duty-unpaid cigarettes from a store unit at Toh Guan Road East. Officers then immediately carried out a follow-up raid at the said location. Upon storming the unit, officers sighted laminated table tops and nylon bags strewn within the unit. Three Singaporean men were arrested and a further 28,004 packets of duty-unpaid cigarettes were seized. Upon questioning, it was found that the men were repacking duty-unpaid cigarettes from the laminated table tops into the nylon bags, awaiting delivery. All the suspects will be charged in Court on 11 July 2007 for customs offences related to cigarette smuggling.

4. 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 by the court, offenders can be jailed as well as fined. The vehicles used in the commission of the offence are also liable to forfeiture. The public are also advised against buying duty-unpaid cigarettes. For a packet of duty-unpaid cigarettes, buyers stand to face a minimum fine of \$200 or prosecution in court.

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

ISSUED BY: SINGAPORE CUSTOMS
DATE: 11 July 2007