



MEDIA RELEASE

Immediate

18 December 2024

FOUR MEN CONVICTED FOR ENGAGING IN A CONSPIRACY TO EVADE DUTY AND GST

Singapore, 18 December 2024 - On 17 December 2024, the State Courts sentenced a male Singaporean, Ng Shi Xiang (“Ng”) (黄軾翔), 38, to a fine of \$712,163.76 for engaging in a conspiracy to evade duty and Goods and Services Tax (GST) - by illegally diverting duty-suspended liquor for local distribution when these were declared to be exported as sea stores¹.

2 During an operation on 2 April 2020, Singapore Customs officers observed a lorry leaving a licensed warehouse² bearing duty-suspended liquor meant for export as sea stores from Penjuru Terminal. The lorry did not proceed directly to Penjuru Terminal and four pallets of duty-suspended liquor were unloaded in the vicinity of Penjuru Lane. These four pallets of liquor were seized by Singapore Customs for investigation.

3 Investigations revealed that sometime between October and November 2019, Chua Tong Ling Melvyn (“Chua”) (蔡忠霖), a 43-year-old male Singaporean, masterminded a scheme to evade payment of duty and GST by diverting duty-

¹Sea stores refer to goods supplied for consumption or use on board a vessel by the crew and passengers outside Singapore waters. The items range from food, cigarettes and liquor to other necessities. As sea stores are considered as exports, they are exempted from payment of duty and GST.

²Licensed warehouses are premises licensed by Singapore Customs for storage of dutiable goods with the duty and GST suspended pending re-export or removal for local consumption. If the goods are to be removed from the licensed warehouse for local consumption, duty and GST are payable.

suspended liquor for local sale, instead of exporting them as sea stores. He asked Ng to find front companies to be declared as the exporters in customs export permits. Chua also asked Tay Liang Hwee, Roger (“Tay”) (鄭良輝), a 46-year-old male Singaporean, to assist with the relevant paperwork.

4 In October 2019, Ng introduced Poh Chee Chean (“Poh”) (傅志前), 41, a male Singaporean who was director of Universeroc Pte Ltd (“Universeroc”), to Chua. Poh agreed to allow Universeroc to be declared as the exporter in the export permits for the export of the duty-suspended liquor as sea stores - in return for \$5 per carton of liquor declared.

5 Poh then created an email account for Universeroc. Poh also provided to Ng a pre-signed cheque book, and Universeroc’s bank account login details.

6 Before any duty-suspended liquor can be removed from licensed warehouses and delivered to vessels, an export permit must be obtained. Chua instructed Tay to create fictitious trade documents and email correspondences to give the impression that the company had received a legitimate order for the export of duty-suspended liquor as sea stores. These falsified documents created were used to apply for the export permits, concealing the fact that the duty-suspended liquor were subsequently diverted inland.

7 Between November 2019 and April 2020, Chua’s scheme resulted in a total of 459 cartons of duty-suspended liquor, or 3,898.2 litres in all, being illegally diverted for local distribution. The total duty and GST evaded amounted to about \$151,440.

8 Ng pleaded guilty to two charges of engaging in a conspiracy to evade payment of duty. Another four similar charges to evade duty and GST were taken into consideration during sentencing.

9 Chua and Tay pleaded guilty to two charges each of engaging in a conspiracy to evade payment of duty. On 3 July 2023, the State Courts sentenced them to fines of \$864,770.28 and \$763,032.60 respectively. Another four similar charges each to

evade payment of duty and GST were taken into consideration during sentencing for both men.

10 Poh pleaded guilty to one charge of engaging in a conspiracy to evade payment of duty. On 6 October 2021, the State Courts sentenced him to a fine of \$300,351.45. Another similar charge to evade payment of GST was taken into consideration during sentencing.

Offences and Penalties

11 Under the Customs Act and the GST Act, buying, selling, conveying, delivering, storing, keeping, possessing or dealing with duty-suspended or duty-unpaid goods with the intent to defraud the Government of any customs duty, excise duty or GST are serious offences. Offenders can be fined up to 20 times the amount of duty and GST evaded and/or jailed for up to two years.

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

Annex A: Photograph

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About Singapore Customs

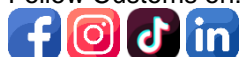
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ANNEX A



The duty-suspended liquor seized