



IMMIGRATION & CHECKPOINTS AUTHORITY

NEWS RELEASE

'SAW-ED' THROUGH THE CEILING

Smugglers these days seem desperate to rake in more money as they try to make use of all available space in their vehicles to stuff duty-unpaid cigarettes. The large blue 'Bus Pekerja' was one such target by smugglers who made use of the spacious bus to bring in contraband cigarettes.

2 The Malaysian bus driver was no stranger to the Woodlands Checkpoint. He had been driving the 'Bus Pekerja' and ferrying workers into Singapore. On 13 January 2010, at about 5.40am, the 43-year old male Indian bus driver, with several workers onboard arrived at the Woodlands Checkpoint. The driver tried to maintain a stoic expression when the bus pulled into the Arrival Bus Concourse for checks. However, the alert Immigration & Checkpoints Authority (ICA) officers sensed his nervousness beneath that feigned composure, who then directed the bus for further checks.

3 True to the officers' instincts, the images from the backscatter scans showed anomalies in the ceiling of the bus. The ICA officers wasted no time in detecting the sealed compartments in the bus ceiling. The initial efforts to reach the contraband cigarettes from the interior of the bus were too arduous due to the many layers between the bus' ceiling to the concealed compartments. It was then the astute ICA officers decided to saw through the ceiling of the bus from the top. Their efforts were paid off

when they uncovered the contraband cigarettes found hidden in the well concealed compartments.



Officers hard at work with the electric saw

4 The final tally of the contraband cigarettes was 1,456 cartons. The potential Customs duty and GST payable for the contrabands amount to about S\$102,500 and S\$9,300 respectively.



Seized exhibits

5 Preliminary investigation revealed that the driver had agreed to smuggle in the contraband cigarettes as he was promised RM1,500 upon successful delivery of the contraband items. The driver claimed that he would only be given further instructions after he had sent all the workers to their workplaces. The case was referred to the Singapore Customs for further investigations.

6 Upon conviction by the court, first time offenders can be fined up to 20 times the amount of duty evaded and liable to a jail term not exceeding three years. For second or subsequent convictions, offenders can be fined up to 40 times the amount of duty evaded and jailed for up to six years. The offenders also face further fines based on the

amount of GST evaded. The vehicle used in conveying the contraband will also be liable for forfeiture.

7 Our borders are our first line of defence in safeguarding Singapore's security. The enhanced security checks are critical to our nation's security. We have tightened our security checks on passengers and vehicles at the checkpoints to prevent attempts to smuggle in undesirable persons, drugs, weapons, explosives and other contrabands.

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