



MEDIA RELEASE

IMMEDIATE

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SINGAPORE CUSTOMS COMMITS TO STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIPS TO STAY ON MISSION

Singapore, 27 Jan 2024 – In celebration of the International Customs Day (ICD) Singapore Customs reiterated its commitment to enhance and develop partnerships to better facilitate trade and protect revenue. Singapore Customs also applauded its officers' contribution over years who have embraced its values and remained true to its mission. ICD is celebrated on 26 January annually worldwide led by the World Customs Organisation (WCO). This year's theme was "Customs Engaging Traditional and New Partners with Purpose".

2 "We must continue to strengthen the ties with all our partners, local and abroad - by sharing best practices, intelligence, and expertise to collectively address the challenges of duties and tax evasion and streamlining revenue collection. Through dialogue, cooperation, and shared responsibility, we can continue to build and enhance a more resilient and sustainable ecosystem in revenue collection," said Mr Tan Hung Hooi, Director-General, Singapore Customs.

3 At an event held at Singapore Customs Operations Command Centre, Mr Tan presented 12 officers with the WCO Certificates of Merit and recognised over 350 colleagues in 10 different categories for their excellent work. More than 100 officers received their Long Service Medal and Good Service Medal this year.

4 "It is our officers' hard work that has helped bring Singapore Customs to what it is today, and such collective resolve and deeds will also determine our future

successes. We need to focus on achieving our strategic goals and seeing through the various projects and tasks as we move ahead as #OneCustoms. We must always maintain the highest standard of integrity and excellence in all our endeavours which are crucial for our progressive journey,” he added.

5 To mark International Customs Day, the WCO awards WCO Certificates of Merit to officers who have demonstrated commitment in their work and resonate with the attributes of Singapore Customs and WCO.

6 As one of the recipients of the WCO Certificate of Merit, Ms Kogila d/o Vannu Gopal, a team leader in the Sea Checkpoints Branch, (SCB), has always displayed a positive-mindset and encourages her officers to streamline and improve work processes for sea-terminals operations. She joined public service in 1997 and has since come a long way. “Working with Customs for the past 27 years was only made possible with the support of my family, supervisors and colleagues. I always strive to be a better person each day and try to stay positive. There are challenging times when handling demanding passengers, but I overcame them with the guidance of my team. Without them this award is not possible. Hence, I’m very grateful for all the support which has contributed to my growth,” she said.

7 Another recipient the WCO Certificate of Merit is Mr Chiam Dao Xian, Deputy Head in Company Compliance Branch. He played a key role in the conceptualisation and development of the Customs Data Masterplan which charted Customs’ plans to enhance its data analytics capability in the areas of Governance, People, Process and Technology. “Since I joined Customs in 2011, I was posted to different branches which not only provided me with diverse exposure and opportunities but allowed me to learn and work with supportive colleagues who helped in my professional growth. Receiving this award is an immense honour, affirming my dedication to my work and inspiring me to set higher goals,” said Mr Chiam.

8 Singapore Customs also presented the Customs Medal for Exemplary Service and Customs Service Medal, at the event.

9 Mr Yeo Sew Meng, Assistant Director-General (Intelligence & Investigation) has been with Singapore Customs since 2003 received the Singapore Customs Medal for Exemplary Service and Singapore Customs Long Service (30 years) Medal. In his career, one of the most significant moment was to participate in the United States-Singapore Free Trade Agreement and the other was the setting up of the strategic goods control regime. Under his leadership he drives the development of strategies and doctrines to enhance the enforcement capabilities in Singapore Customs. These capabilities pertain to the intelligence gathering and investigation of illicit activities such as smuggling, contraventions of export control, revenue evasion and other customs violations by criminal syndicates and the trading community. Through his journey, he said “Developing skills for staff and finding the right opportunities to up their skills was certainly a challenge. I’m very honoured and humbled to be receiving this award”.

10 A senior officer with Procedures & Systems Branch, Mr Muhammad Haziq Bin Azmi received the Service Delivery Excellence Award. He is part of the team that assists traders with their enquiries and ensures they receive resolutions to the problems that they face/questions asked. “Coordinating between different vendors to achieve the workflow process and making it seamless was a challenging task for us. After implementing the changes in transforming the contact centre, we received many compliments from traders and they gave us the affirmation that the changes had benefited them in many ways. With live chat, the team found it more efficient and user-friendly to solve enquiries,” he said. He is grateful that the teams’ efforts in making the customer journey a more pleasant experience is being recognised and their efforts are rewarded.

11 This year, the Customs Enforcement Award was awarded to the team who conducted the Operations Skyfall. The operations involved detecting and apprehending motor vehicles importers who undeclare the values of their vehicles. Mr Chia and Mr Ang from the Trade Investigation Branch (TIB) who led the very challenging case shared that through the team’s perseverance and determination, they were able to navigate the complexities and successfully bring resolution to the case. TIB plays a crucial role in ensuring tax evaders are stopped in their tracks.

12 “This was a scheme carefully devised by the accused persons to mask evidence trail and to frustrate investigations by deploying layering tactics. They also created fictitious invoices to further obfuscate the money trails. However, they could not get away from the team’s resolve, teamwork and grit. The team put in months of hard work, painstakingly reconstructing the money trails for each of the over 4000 cars to establish the actual values and the duty and GST evaded. The hard work paid off. Eventually, the team managed to peel their defenses and tactics, and uncovered the modus operandi,” they said.

Annex A: Singapore Customs’ Director-General, Mr Tan Hung Hooi’s speech at the ICD event.

Annex B: WCO message

Annex C: Write up on award profiles

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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 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 these 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.

To find out more, visit our website at www.customs.gov.sg
Follow us at www.facebook.com/SingaporeCustoms

Annex A

International Customs Day 2024 Speech by Director-General Tan Hung Hooi Friday, 26 Jan 2024, COC Auditorium

Distinguished guests,
Fellow Customs colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is with great pleasure and pride that we gather here today to celebrate International Customs Day or ICD, an annual occasion of immense significance for all of us in the customs community. This year's theme of "Customs Engaging Traditional and New Partners with Purpose" is especially relevant for Singapore Customs, as we work on our various transformation initiatives. It also reinforces the A, B and C values and mindsets that we seek to embody in all our customs leaders and officers. "A- Always the Mission, B-Bias for Collaboration, and C-Care for our People".

2 As we reflect on Singapore Customs' role as the collector of duties and import GST, it becomes evident that the landscape in which we operate is evolving rapidly. Globalisation, technological advancements, and emerging trends in trade demand that we adapt, innovate, and build meaningful partnerships. Today, I would like to address the importance of engaging both traditional and new partners with purpose – a purpose that aligns with our commitment to foster and contribute towards sustainable economic developments for Singapore.

3 First and foremost, let us recognise the crucial role that our traditional partners play in the customs ecosystem. Our longstanding collaborations with fellow customs authorities, law enforcement agencies, and business communities have been instrumental in upholding the integrity of our revenue collection. We must continue to strengthen these ties - by sharing best practices, intelligence, and expertise to collectively address the challenges of duties and tax evasion and streamlining revenue collection. Allow me to take this opportunity today to salute our international customs partners who are present with us here in this auditorium.

4 At the same time, this year's theme underscores the imperative to embrace innovation and forge partnerships with new stakeholders. In an era defined by rapid technological advancements, the customs landscape is increasingly driven and transformed by the impact of digitalisation, data analytics, and artificial intelligence (AI). To harness the full power of such innovation and enhance our enforcement capabilities, we must proactively engage with the first-movers and thought leaders within the private sector, as well as technology providers and other non-traditional partners.

5 The strategic purpose behind these engagements is clear – to create an efficient, seamless and secure environment for revenue collection. Through such collaborations with both traditional and new partners, we not only enhance our capabilities in combating illicit activities, but also continue to facilitate legitimate trade – in line with our roles of revenue collector and trade facilitator.

6 As we look toward to the future, collaboration and partnership must be at the forefront of our efforts. Customs agencies, trade organisations, private enterprises, and civil society must come together to address evolving challenges and seize opportunities that lie ahead. Through dialogue, cooperation, and shared responsibility, we will build a more resilient and sustainable ecosystem in revenue collection.

7 As we embark on this journey of collaboration, let us remain committed to our Vision, Mission and Values that define Singapore Customs. Staying relevant is key to achieving our strategic goals and seeing through the various projects and tasks we have set out. We must embrace the spirit of innovation and continuous improvement as we move ahead together as #OneCustoms. Respecting and caring for our people and maintaining the highest standard of integrity in all our endeavours are crucial for our progressive journey, and this is where all of you come in.

8 Today, we are presenting 12 officers with the WCO Certificates of Merit and recognising over 350 colleagues in 10 different categories for their excellent work. We have over 100 officers who will be receiving their Long Service Medal and Good Service Medal too. These officers' exemplary hard work and dedication to the Customs

profession are indeed commendable and I would like to say a big 'Thank You'. Not only to all award recipients, but also every Singapore Customs officer here and on duty on the ground at this moment. We greatly appreciate how you have worked tirelessly over the years to bring Singapore Customs to greater heights.

9 As we celebrate International Customs Day and congratulate our fellow colleagues for their awards, it is important to reflect on our achievement as an organisation. In line with this year's ICD theme, Singapore Customs has kept up our engagement with our global counterparts in deepening relations and upholding Singapore's reputation as a resilient, transparent and trusted trading hub for the trading community.

10 All the 10 customs administrations of ASEAN Member States (AMS) signed the Mutual Recognition Arrangement (MRA) of their respective Authorised Economic Operator (AEO) programmes –also known as the AAMRA – last year. This would help to facilitate Singapore's trade within the ASEAN region. Another major milestone that we achieved was the Free Trade Zones (FTZ) (Amendment) Bill that was successfully passed in Parliament on 4 October last year. The Bill helps to update and strengthen our FTZ regime, maintaining Singapore's status as a trusted global trading hub.

11 On the enforcement front, our detection and deterrence efforts - including those with our partner agencies like ICA - remain active and key as we collect revenue for our nation. At Checkpoints, we further raised travellers' awareness of their tax obligations to further mitigate against tax evasion. Our series of joint enforcement operations led to the recovery of millions of dollars in penalties and revenue.

12 We continued to work closely with other enforcement agencies to disrupt the supply and distribution of duty-unpaid cigarettes (DUC) and enforced against other revenue-related offences with the most recent one against motor vehicles importers.

13 We have set up the Data Division to develop Singapore Customs' data expertise and harness the full potential of data and AI. We will also establish a new Trade Strategy & Development Branch (TS&D Br) to better drive our trade transformation and international connectivity goals.

14 As we continue to serve our people with a purpose, it is vital to ensure that public perception of our organisation and our officers are aligned with the essential and meaningful work we do for Singapore and Singaporeans. Hence, we have already embarked on a Branding Exercise and our officers can look forward to a refreshed Brand Identity that will clearly reflect who we are, what we do, and what we stand for.

15 In citing some examples of our officers' outstanding work, I am also highlighting the laudable benchmarks that have been set, to especially inspire the aspirations of our newer officers joining the Singapore Customs' family. It is our officers' hard work that has helped bring Singapore Customs to what it is today, and such collective resolve and deeds will also determine our future successes. I therefore extend my heartfelt gratitude to each and every one of you for your dedication and diligence. On this International Customs Day, let us reaffirm our commitment to the noble cause of customs engagement and forging partnerships with purpose, as we continue to nurture a safer, more prosperous future for Singapore.

16 Thank you, and may we continue to make Singapore Customs a beacon of excellence in revenue collection as well as enabling revenue streams for our nation's economic and social development.

Happy International Customs Day!

Annex B



Message from the World Customs Organization International Customs Day 2024

Embargo date: 26 January 2024, UTC 09:00

On 26 January each year, the Customs community comes together to celebrate International Customs Day. As we gather to commemorate this important occasion, I am filled with a profound sense of honour and anticipation in my first year as Secretary General. While this year's celebration is especially significant for me, its wider importance in part comes from it marking the launch of our new theme: "Customs Engaging Traditional and New Partners with Purpose".

This year, we are embarking on a path that challenges us to both reaffirm our longstanding partnerships and to boldly forge new alliances. Our world has changed dramatically over the last decade and continues to do so, presenting us with unprecedented challenges, including rapid technological advances, environmental and health crises, and complex geopolitical and economic dynamics. These conditions require that the global Customs community take a forward-thinking approach to its work and seek solutions that are not just based on its own knowledge and resources, but are supplemented by the support of stakeholders.

The theme for 2024 is a strategic call to action, urging us to broaden our perspectives, think creatively, and embrace innovative approaches. This is essential for Customs administrations to maintain their role in facilitating global trade and ensuring security in a rapidly evolving environment.

In 2024, we focus on deepening and enriching our established relationships to ensure they continue to be strong, relevant, and mutually beneficial. At the same time, we aim to actively seek and establish new connections with a wider range of stakeholders, including financial institutions, environmental organizations, NGOs, and academic institutions.

These new partnerships will infuse our efforts with fresh perspectives and innovative solutions. Our collaboration this year is about aligning all our partnerships with the overarching mission and values of our Customs administrations. We aim to ensure they contribute meaningfully to our objectives of trade facilitation, border security, and the resilience of global supply chains.

Incorporating a broad spectrum of voices and perspectives into our strategies is also paramount. Doing so will ensure that our strategies are comprehensive and more resonant with the global community we serve.

Annex C

International Customs Day (ICD) 2024

Commemorating the maiden session of the World Customs Organisation (WCO) held in 1953, ICD is held every year on January 26. The day is celebrated to honour and spread awareness about the role played by Customs authorities in the smooth movement of goods across borders. This year's theme, "Customs Engaging Traditional and New Partners with Purpose". It resonates deeply with the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead for Singapore Customs. ICD is an annual occasion of immense significance for all of us in the customs community.

World Customs Organisation (WCO) Certificate of Merit

1) Mr Chiam Dao Xian

Mr Chiam Dao Xian is one of the awardees receiving the WCO Certificate of Merit. He is a Deputy Head in the Company Compliance Branch. Played a key role in the conceptualisation and development of the Customs Data Masterplan which charted Customs' plans to enhance its data analytics capability in the areas of Governance, People, Process and Technology. The implementation of the Data Masterplan is an important initiative to enable Customs to derive insights, manage risks and make decisions.

Dao Xian also led the data analytics projects to streamline and improve the efficiency of work processes of branches by partnering the branch users through multiple sessions. He identified user cases, understood the requirements and fine-tune the solutions for implementation. One of the examples done by Dao Xian is the workflow process which he developed for Intelligence Branch (IB) - to easily identify permits used to smuggle duty-unpaid cigarettes.

By entering a few search parameters which replaced the previous manual filtering of such permits using Excel. The permits which were identified would aid IB's further studies on past smuggling attempts using the same modus operandi and/or mount future operations to uncover more duty-unpaid cigarettes.

Dao Xian also conducted briefings for Risk Assessment Branch (RAB) officers on the computation logic of anomalies/outliers rules and emerging modus operandi for duty-unpaid cigarettes smuggling to enhance officers' knowledge and ability to perform their work targets.

2) Ms Kogila d/o Vannu Gopal

Ms Kogila d/o Vannu Gopal is a Team Leader of the Sea Checkpoints Branch (SCB). Ms Kogila has always displayed a positive-mindset and encourages her officers to streamline and improve work processes for sea-terminals operations. She has led her teams on several engagement & outreach initiatives to uplift travellers' awareness on Customs regulations at the sea terminals.

Additionally, through regular training and sharing sessions, Ms Kogila was able to build a strong rapport and continue to deepen Customs' engagement with our key

stakeholders such as Immigrations & Checkpoints Authority (ICA) and the terminals' operators.

In 2023, to align with Customs' strategic drive towards "Cashless, Manless, and Seamless" checkpoints, SCB was chosen to pilot-trial several transformative initiatives. Ms Kogila and her team took up the challenge and help to drive the initiative – "Push for Fully Cashless Payment at checkpoints" and the results were commendable. Through this initiative, Ms Kogila has led her team to streamline the work processes, engage the stakeholders (e.g. the ferry operators) and through active and innovative collaborations, has enabled Customs to efficiently disseminate our regulations to all arriving travellers, thus achieving 100% cashless collection at Marina Bay Cruise Centre.

Beyond her current duties, Ms Kogila has also displayed eagerness to learn, contribute and share her knowledge with fellow colleagues. She coaches the young officers who newly joined the section and help them settle into the role with ease. Kogila also continue to leverage on her knowledge in Customs trade/compliance procedures in performing Customs work. She was commended by Permits Compliance Branch (PSB) for her efficient processing of the backlog refund applications when SCB officers were tasked to help PSB during Covid.

Long Service Award

Mr Yeo Sew Meng

Mr Yeo Sew Meng, **Assistant Director-General (Intelligence & Investigation)** (ADG-I&I) has been with Singapore Customs since 2003 received the **Singapore Customs Medal for Exemplary Service and Singapore Customs Long Service (30 years) Medal**. Under his leadership as ADG (I&I), Sew Meng drives the development of **strategies and doctrines to enhance the enforcement capabilities in Singapore Customs**. These capabilities pertain to the intelligence gathering and investigation of illicit activities such as smuggling, contraventions of export control, revenue evasion and other customs violations by criminal syndicates and the trading community. He plays an instrumental role in the enforcement against duty-unpaid cigarettes activities and to bring it under control. Worked with Senior Assistant Director-General (I&I) with the successful operationalisation of the new Customs Operations Command (COC), a purpose-built facility to support the enforcement operations. He led the team in ensuring the smooth commencement of operation in Jun 2019. He leads and manages the Division amidst the challenging Covid-19 situation where he oversaw much of the efforts in terms of ensuring the operational readiness of COC and puts in commendable effort in managing the morale of ground officers. He develops capabilities such as establishment of the Digital Forensic Unit and Polygraph Unit within I&I Division. Sew Meng is also the Executive Vice-President of the Customs Recreation Club (CRC). Under his leadership and guidance, the CRC has played an instrumental role in promoting the well-being of our members by organising numerous sports, recreational and social activities on a regular basis.

Service Delivery Excellence Award

Mr Muhammad Haziq Bin Azmi

Mr Muhammad Haziq Bin Azmi is a senior officer with Procedures & Systems Branch (PSB) who has received the Service Delivery Excellence Award. He has been with Singapore Customs for four years - started working with the Intelligence & Investigations branch doing enforcement work and currently with PSB. He is part of the team that assists traders with their enquiries and ensures they receive resolutions to the problems that they face/questions asked.

Coordinating between different vendors to achieve the work flow process and making it seamless was a challenging task for him. After implementing the changes in transforming the contact centre, the team received many compliments from traders and they gave them the affirmation that the changes had benefited them in many ways. With the live chat, the team found it more efficient and user-friendly to solve enquiries. He is grateful that the teams' efforts in making the customer experience journey more efficient is being recognised and their efforts are rewarded.

Annex D



Director-General of Singapore Customs, Mr Tan Hung Hooi delivering his speech at the International Customs Day 2024 event.



Assistant Director-General (Intelligence & Investigation), Mr Yeo Sew Meng (left) receiving the Singapore Customs Medal for Exemplary Service and Singapore Customs Long Service (30 years) Medal from our Director-General, Mr Tan Hung Hooi (right).



Director-General, Mr Tan Hung Hooi with this year's World Customs Organisation (WCO) Certificate of Merit recipients.