



MEDIA RELEASE

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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

Annex D: Photographs

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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
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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.