



SINGAPORE

3 million packs of contraband cigarettes seized last year

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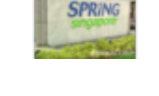
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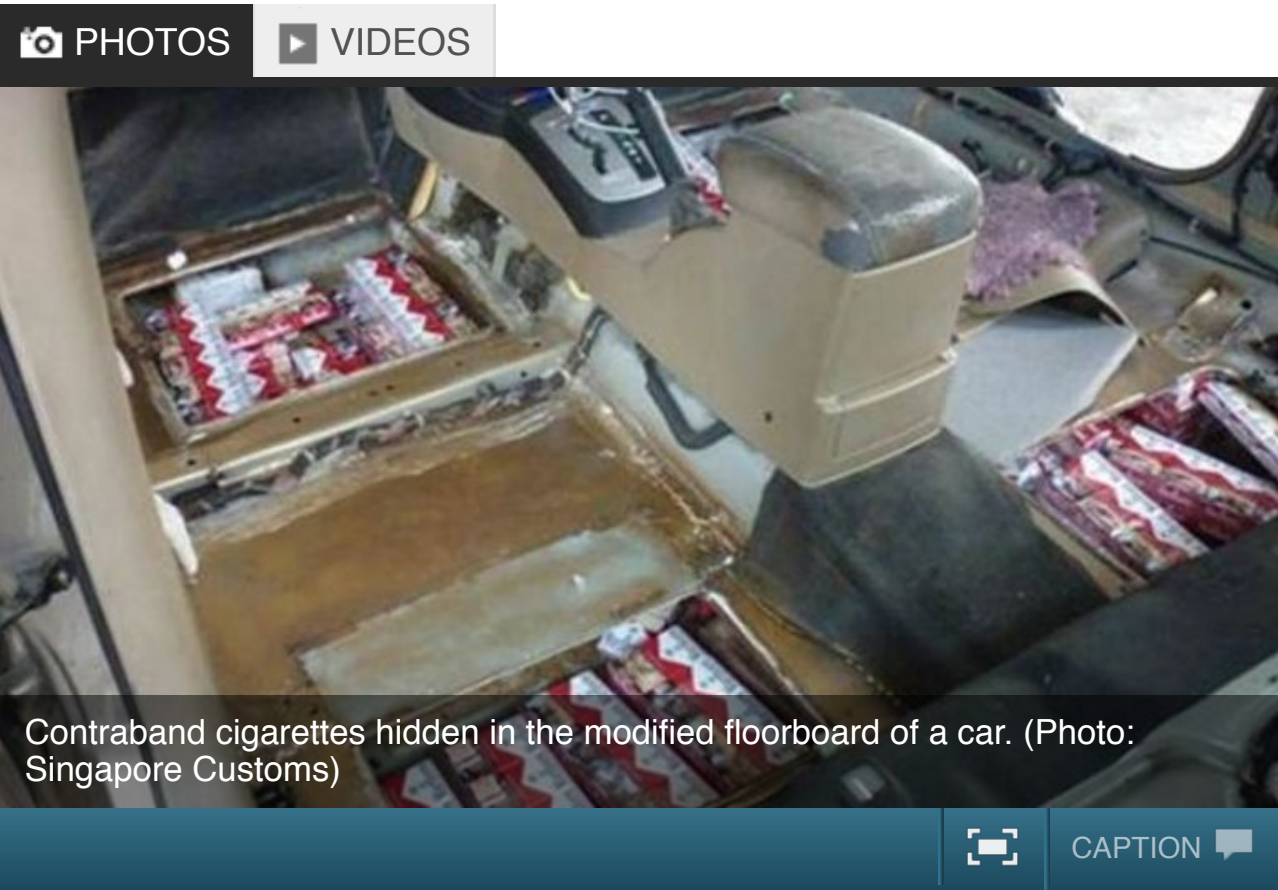
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The figure is a 3.4 per cent increase from 2013 and is the highest since 2009, says the Singapore Customs.



SINGAPORE: Three million packs of contraband cigarettes were seized last year, a 3.4 per cent increase from the 2.9 million seized in 2013 and the highest since 2009, the Singapore Customs said on Wednesday (Feb 4).

The number of vehicles found to have smuggled contraband cigarettes also increased to 243 last year – a 65.3 per cent increase from the 147 vehicles in 2013. Many of the vehicles were found to have modified compartments used to hide the cigarettes, the Singapore Customs said at a press conference announcing its annual enforcement statistics.

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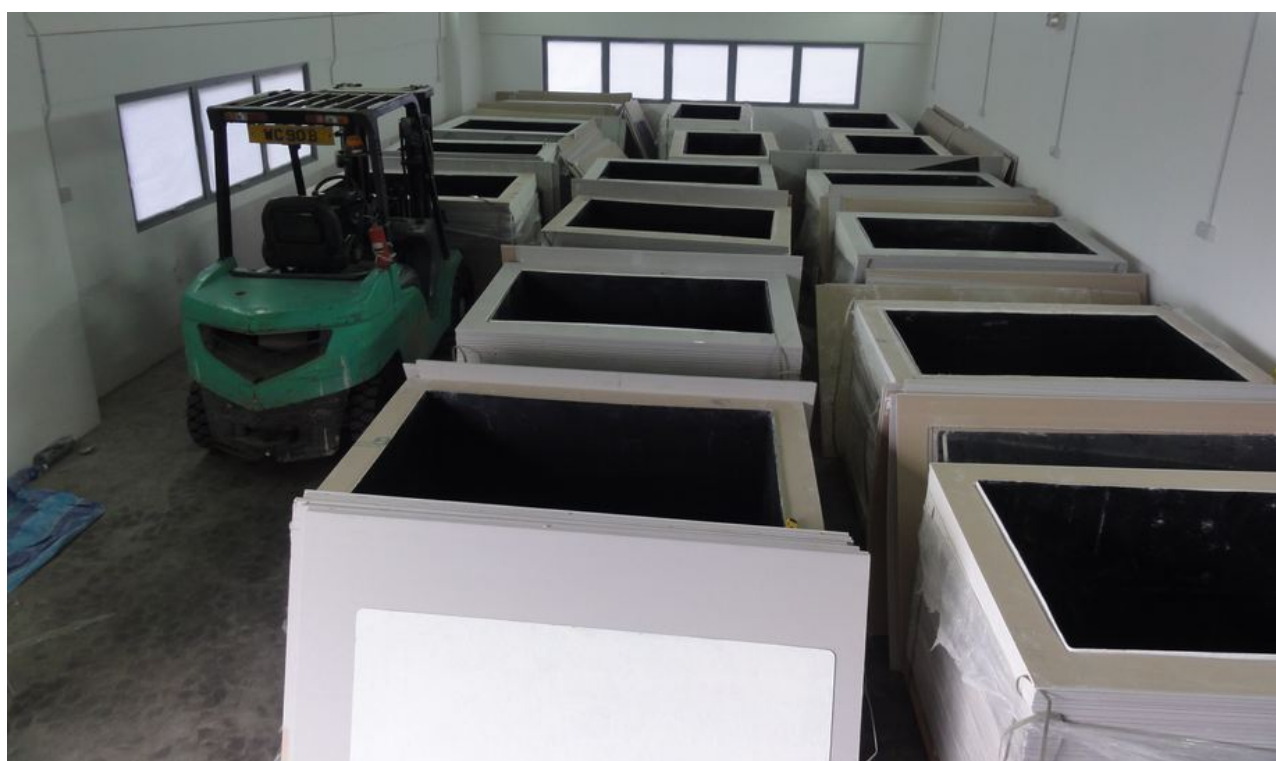
A total of 23,862 people were caught for contraband cigarette-related offences, including 5,893 caught for smoking or possessing the cigarettes. While the number of offenders fell from the 27,041 caught in 2013, the figures remained high, suggesting that the demand for contraband cigarettes remains high, Singapore Customs said.

More people were caught trying to smuggle liquor through checkpoints, with the number of offenders rising 2.9 per cent to 1,305 in 2014 from 1,268 in 2013.

SYNDICATES BUSTED

Three contraband cigarette syndicates – two run by Chinese nationals and one by a Singaporean – were disrupted last year. More than 57,000 packs of contraband cigarettes were seized from these operations and 11 people arrested, Singapore Customs said.

In a separate joint operation with the Immigration and Checkpoints Authority of Singapore, 149,990 packs of contraband cigarettes were found concealed in specially constructed hollow spaces beneath stacks of board partitions, making it the largest seizure of contraband cigarettes in 2014.





In August 2014, authorities disrupted a liquor syndicate that attempted to smuggle a consignment of beer into Singapore, and seized 64,800 cans of duty-unpaid beer. Two Chinese nationals were arrested and investigations are ongoing.



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