

Illegal cigarette consignment to be destroyed

Government's renewed vigour to eliminate illegal tobacco imports and exports will be demonstrated on Friday when a multi-department operation will see 12 million cigarettes being destroyed.



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The consignment, which has a R18-million market value will be destroyed at the State Warehouse, at no.9 FW de Klerk Boulevard, Cape Town Foreshore at 8am.

In a statement, the South African Revenue Service (Sars) said the cigarettes would be shredded on-site, with due regard to health and safety protocols.

“The waste will then be transferred via a conveyor belt to special trucks and removed under supervision to a secured landfill site,” said the revenue collector on Thursday.

The illegal cigarettes were seized in various operations, including the seizure of a 40-foot container smuggled into the country and falsely declared as another commodity.

“The clampdown on illicit imports and exports is a major focus of government under the auspices of the Inter-Agency Working Group (IAWG) on Illicit Trade, which consists of several government departments and agencies,” it said.

The IAWG focuses on illegal clothing, textiles, footwear, leather, infrastructure sold as scrap metal, as well as second hand motor vehicles.

Sars said the destruction of the illegal goods must send a strong message that government has adopted a zero-tolerance approach towards illegal trade and to sensitise the public about the harm that these goods do to the economy and the health of people.

“Such illegal activities destroy the country’s manufacturing capacity, which in turn leads to unemployment, inequality and poverty. Illegal imports and exports are also a source of funding for criminal syndicates.

“The fight against the scourge of illegal imports and exports is also of major importance because it reduces the amount of revenue that Sars collects.”

The revenue generated said Sars, plays an important role in enabling government to build a capable state that provides basic services to poor and vulnerable individuals and households, as well as relief to employers and employees during the Covid-19 pandemic.

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