



ENGAGED: (Right) Ang Yuen Peng and Naavit So Tin, who won \$93,200 at Genting Highlands (above), planned to use the windfall for their wedding.

JACKPOT



PICTURE: SHIN MIN DAILY NEWS

WIN GOES SOUTH



THEY WANT GENTING WINNINGS IN CASH

THEY DON'T DECLARE CASH AT S'PORE CHECKPOINT

THEY'RE FINED THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS

S'pore couple wouldn't have been taxed if they declared cash

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THEY hit the jackpot and won almost RM225,000 (\$93,200) at Genting Highlands.

Ang Yuen Peng, 33, and her boyfriend, Naavit So Tin, 22, asked for the winnings in cash.

They then drove into Singapore with the money stuffed in two bags.

Worried that they would be taxed, they did not declare the amount at the checkpoint.

For that, both of them ended up being taken to court.

Last week, Ang was fined \$3,000 while Naavit was fined \$2,000 after they pleaded guilty.

Under the law, anyone moving more than \$30,000 in or out of Singapore is required to declare the amount.

But here's the irony: Gambling winnings here or overseas are not taxable.

In other words, the couple would have been allowed to keep their entire windfall if they had declared the money.

The court heard that Ang, a receptionist, and Naavit, a mechanic, had driven to Genting Highlands last October for a holiday.

While they were there, Naavit, a Malaysian citizen, won RM224,955.95 playing jackpot machines.

The casino had initially given them their winnings in the form of a crossed cheque.

But the couple wanted cash instead.

This was because they felt it would take too long to encash the cheque in Johor Baru.

On 29 Oct 2008, on their way back to Singapore, Ang changed some of the ringgit into Singapore dollars for her use.

The windfall would come in handy for the couple. They wanted to deposit the money into Ang's bank account, and eventually use it to pay for their upcoming wedding. It would also go to settle some outstanding bills.

Around 1.45pm that day, the couple was stopped by Immigration and Checkpoints Authority officers at Tuas Checkpoint for a routine check.

They were entering Singapore through the Green channel, which was for those who do not have dutiable, controlled or prohibited goods to declare.

During the check, one of the officers discovered the money in Ang's bag.

When she was asked how much money there was, Ang replied that there was about RM60,000.

She added that the money was an insurance claim from her dead father's policies.

Suspicious

The officer however, felt that Ang's behaviour was suspicious, and decided to carry out a thorough check on the couple.

A total of RM100,000 (\$49,500) and \$5,050 was found in Ang's black bag.

Another RM100,000 was found in a bag belonging to Naavit.

When questioned, Naavit replied that the cash in his bag was from his bank account.

Both were placed under arrest.

A Casino de Genting spokesman said that winnings above RM1,000 are usually given in the form of a cheque.

The New Paper understands that such cheques can be encashed in Singapore banks, though a bank fee might be incurred.

It is also understood that some casinos allow telegraphic transfers for big winnings, so that the money can be deposited into the winner's bank account directly.

During investigations, Ang admitted that she knew she had to make a declaration if she was bringing in money above a certain amount.

However, she said she was unsure of the declaration procedure or the prescribed amount.

She also admitted that she wanted to avoid declaration so that she would not be taxed on winnings.

An Inland Revenue Authority of Singapore spokesman said that local and overseas winnings from betting or gambling are generally not taxable in Singapore.

Ang faced another charge of giving a false answer when she lied that she had only RM60,000 in her bag. The charge was taken into consideration during sentencing.

In their mitigation, their lawyer said that it was a unique case and that the couple was unlikely to re-offend.

The couple was charged under the Corruption, Drug Trafficking and Other Serious Crimes (Confiscation of Benefits) (Amendment) Act 2007.

The Act does not restrict the amount someone can move in or out of Singapore, but they are required to declare it if the amount exceeds \$30,000.

Ill-gotten gains

When contacted, a police spokesman explained the rationale for this law.

"Criminals, in particular transnational crime groups, and terrorism financiers around the world have been known to use cash couriers as a major means of moving funds across borders either to finance their illicit activities or to launder their ill-gotten gains.

"Hence, this initiative is part of Singapore's overall efforts to combat transnational crime, money laundering and terrorism financing to require the reporting of cross border movements of currency or bearer negotiable instruments," the spokesman said.

She added that two people were prosecuted in 2008, and three persons in the first three months of this year, for similar offences.

For failing to declare that they were bringing in more than \$30,000, Ang and Naavit could have been fined \$50,000 and jailed three years.