IMMIGRATION & CHECKPOINTS AUTHORITY
HEALTH SCIENCES AUTHORITY
AGRI-FOOD & VETERINARY AUTHORITY

JOINT NEWS RELEASE

4,500 SACHETS OF CHEWING TOBACCO AND 121 LIVE BIRDS
DETECTED AT WOODLANDS CHECKPOINT

On 26 February 2018 at about 6am, an Immigration & Checkpoints Authority (ICA) officer directed a Malaysian-registered tour bus, driven by a lone 30-year-old man, for checks at Woodlands Checkpoint.

2.   During the course of checks, ICA officers found three black bundles in red plastic bags, which were subsequently found to contain 4,500 sachets of chewing tobacco, at the luggage compartment at the right side of the bus.

3.   As the import and sale of chewing tobacco is prohibited in Singapore under section 15(1)(b) of the Tobacco (Control of Advertisements and Sale) Act, the sachets of chewing tobacco were referred to the Health Sciences Authority (HSA) for investigation. Any person who is convicted of importing chewing tobacco is liable to a fine of up to S$10,000, or imprisonment of up to 6 months or both for the first offence, and to a fine of up to S$20,000, or imprisonment of up to 12 months or to both for the second or subsequent offence. Any chewing tobacco imported will be seized and confiscated. Information pertaining to the prohibition of harmful tobacco products in Singapore is available on HSA's website.

4.   The public is strongly advised not to purchase or bring prohibited tobacco products into Singapore. HSA encourages members of the public who have information on the illegal import, distribution, sale or offer for sale of prohibited tobacco products to call its Tobacco Regulation Branch at Tel: 6684-2036 or 6684-2037 during office hours (9:00am to 5:30pm, Monday to Friday).

5.   ICA officers also detected 121 live birds in 10 boxes, concealed in another compartment at the right side of the bus. The live birds consisted of Fischer's Lovebirds, Red Whiskered Bulbuls, White Rumped Shamas and Spotted Doves. The Fischer's Lovebird is a protected species under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). The man, live birds and bus were handed over to the Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority of Singapore (AVA) for investigations. The man has been charged in court on 28 Feb.

6.   CITES permits are required for any import, export and re-export of CITES species, including their parts and products. Under the Endangered Species (Import and Export) Act, offenders can be fined up to S$50,000 per scheduled species (not exceeding a maximum aggregate of S$500,000) and/or imprisonment of up to two years upon conviction.

7.   In addition, the import of animals and birds without a licence is an offence under the Animals and Birds Act. Any person, on conviction, is liable to a fine of up to S$10,000, or imprisonment of up to 12 months or to both. Furthermore, any person who causes any unnecessary pain or suffering to any animal shall be liable upon conviction to a fine of up to S$15,000 or imprisonment of up to 18 months or to both.

8.   Our borders are our first line of defence in safeguarding Singapore's security. The security checks are critical to our nation's security. The ICA will continue to conduct security checks on passengers and vehicles at the checkpoints to prevent attempts to smuggle in undesirable persons, drugs, weapons, explosives and other contrabands. The same methods of concealment used by contraband smugglers may be used by terrorists to smuggle arms and explosives to carry out attacks in Singapore.

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4,500 sachets of chewing tobacco were detected at the luggage compartment at the right side of the bus (Photo: ICA)

10 boxes containing the live birds (Photo: AVA)