



**AGRI-FOOD & VETERINARY AUTHORITY  
AND IMMIGRATION & CHECKPOINTS AUTHORITY  
JOINT NEWS RELEASE**

**Man sentenced to jail for smuggling star tortoises**

A 50-year-old man, Khalid bin Awad Bamadhaj, was sentenced to one-month imprisonment by the court today for smuggling 22 live star tortoises into Singapore. Khalid was also charged for causing unnecessary pain or suffering to the tortoises. This charge was taken into consideration in the sentencing.

2 On 23 June 2016, the Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority of Singapore (AVA) was alerted by the Immigration and Checkpoints Authority (ICA) on the detection of 22 live star tortoises in the boot of a car at Woodlands Checkpoint. The tortoises were kept inside a cloth bag and placed together with bags of groceries. The case was referred to AVA for further investigations.



Boot of car where the cloth bag containing the star tortoises were found (circled)



A total of 22 star tortoises were found inside the cloth bag.

Photo source: AVA

**MEDIA RELEASE**

3 AVA's investigations revealed that Khalid had imported the tortoises without an AVA permit. He had intended to keep the smuggled tortoises as pets. The tortoises were identified to be Indian Star Tortoises, a protected species under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). These endangered species are not allowed to be kept as pets. The seized tortoises are being cared for by Wildlife Reserves Singapore.

### **Public advisory**

4 The Singapore Government has zero tolerance in the use of Singapore as a conduit for smuggling of endangered species. Our borders are our first line of defence in safeguarding Singapore's safety and security. The security checks are critical to our nation's security. ICA will continue to conduct security checks on cargo, passengers and vehicles at the checkpoints to prevent attempts to smuggle in undesirable persons, drugs, weapons, explosives and other contrabands. AVA will continue to cooperate and collaborate with partner local and international enforcement agencies to curb wildlife trafficking. AVA will take enforcement action against any person or company that smuggles wildlife into or through Singapore.

5 In Singapore, CITES permits are required for any import, export and re-export of CITES-listed species. Offenders can be fined up to S\$50,000 per scheduled species (not exceeding a maximum aggregate of S\$500,000) and/or jailed up to 2 years, upon conviction.

6 Travellers are reminded not to import or keep wild animals as pets as demand for such animals would fuel illegal wildlife trade. Wildlife are not suitable pets as some may transmit zoonotic diseases to humans and pose a public safety risk if mishandled or if they escape into our dense urban environment. Non-native animals may also be a threat to our biodiversity if released into the environment.

# **MEDIA RELEASE**

7 The ICA and AVA would like to remind travellers against bringing live animals, birds and insects into Singapore without a proper permit. The public can refer to AVA's website or download AVA's mobile app, SG TravelKaki (available free-of-charge from [iTunes](#) and the [Google Play store](#)), for more information on bringing back animals from overseas. Members of the public with information on illegal wildlife activities may contact AVA at 6805 2992 or via AVA's [online feedback form](#). All information shared with AVA would be kept strictly confidential.

**Issued by the Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority and the Immigration & Checkpoints Authority**

On 25 April 2018

**MEDIA RELEASE**