



**Vietnamese man sentenced to 15 months in jail for smuggling rhinoceros horns**

Issued on 16 January 2014

A Vietnamese man was sentenced to 15 months in jail for smuggling rhinoceros horns through Singapore on 16 January 2014.

2 On 10 January 2014, aviation screening officers at the Singapore Changi Airport detected a luggage bag with suspected rhinoceros horns. The bag had arrived in a flight from Dubai and in transit to Laos via Singapore. Upon further investigation, the Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority (AVA) found a total of 8 pieces of rhinoceros horns weighing about 21.5kg, and estimated to be worth almost SGD1.7 million dollars, in the checked-in luggage bag.

3 The owner of the bag, a 22-year-old Vietnamese national, was immediately arrested. Investigations revealed that the accused had travelled to Mozambique to purchase the rhinoceros horns to be brought back to Vietnam for sale. To evade checks, he also travelled to other African countries before taking a flight from Uganda to Vietnam via Dubai, Singapore and Laos, with Vietnam as his final destination.

4 The 8 pieces of rhinoceros horns were examined and identified by zoological experts from the Wildlife Reserves Singapore to be from the African black rhinoceros (*Diceros bicornis*), which is a critically endangered species protected under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

5 Under the Endangered Species (Import and Export) Act (ESA), CITES permits are required for any import, export and re-export of CITES species, including their parts and products. It is also an offence under the ESA if the CITES species or their parts and products are not accompanied by proper CITES permits when they are in

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transit or being transhipped through Singapore. Penalties for infringing the Act include fines of up to \$50,000 per scheduled species (not exceeding a maximum aggregate of \$500,000) and/or up to 2 years imprisonment.

6 The Singapore Government does not condone the use of Singapore as a conduit to smuggle endangered species and their parts and products. We will not hesitate to take harsh enforcement actions against any person or company that smuggles wildlife through Singapore. AVA will continue to cooperate and collaborate with partner enforcement agencies nationally and internationally to curb wildlife trafficking. Anyone with information on illegal wildlife trade may contact AVA at 6325 7625 or via AVA's [online feedback form](#). All information shared with AVA would be kept strictly confidential.

**Issued by the Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority of Singapore**

16 January 2014

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**Illegal trade of rhinoceros horns**

The population of African black rhinoceros has declined drastically in the last decade due to increased level of poaching for their horns. There are estimated only 5,000 African black rhinoceroses left in the wild. International trade in rhinoceros horns is strictly prohibited.

Rhinoceros horns are typically used in Traditional Chinese Medicine, and believed to be a panacea for many ailments. Whole pieces are also used as a status symbol and gifts to signify wealth and power. Rhinoceros horns are also manufactured, albeit to a lesser extent, for use as dagger handles, or jambiya as more commonly known. Rhinoceros horns have also been rumoured to be a miracle cure for cancer and effective body detoxifier after heavy consumption of alcohol or rich food.

**Illegal rhinoceros horns seized in Singapore**

The last seizure of rhinoceros horns was in 1991, where a company was fined \$1000 for importing 4 pieces of rhinoceros horns from Indonesia without a permit.

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**Photos of the rhinoceros horns seized**

No	Image	Caption
1		Luggage bag containing only rhinoceros horns (Photo: AVA)
2		The 8 pieces of seized Rhinoceros horn. The rhinoceros horns in the foreground were found in the luggage as 3 separate pieces. (Photo: WRS)

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