



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**HEALTH SCIENCES AUTHORITY  
PRESS RELEASE  
22 MAY 2019**

## **MAN GETS SEVEN MONTHS' JAIL FOR ORCHESTRATING THE SMUGGLING OF LARGE QUANTITIES OF CHEWING TOBACCO INTO SINGAPORE**

The Health Sciences Authority (HSA) has prosecuted Saravana Kumar Lechumanan, a 30-year-old Malaysian man, for his role in arranging couriers to smuggle a total of 25,659 sachets of Hans Chhap khaini tobacco, a type of chewing tobacco, into Singapore. The street value of 25,659 sachets of chewing tobacco is estimated to be worth more than \$50,000. (Refer to Annex A for photos).

2 Saravana was sentenced to seven months' imprisonment. This is the stiffest punishment to-date for importing chewing tobacco, which is prohibited in Singapore.

3 From June to September 2018, the Immigration & Checkpoints Authority had on five occasions uncovered Malaysian-registered vehicles with hidden goods of a total of 25,659 sachets "Hans Chhap Tobacco". These sachets were found concealed in vehicle compartments such as door panels, tire jack compartment, bumper and floor board (see Annex for photographs).

4 Investigations by HSA revealed that Saravana had been recruiting couriers to smuggle Hans Chhap khaini tobacco from Malaysia into Singapore. Saravana would rent vehicles and dismantle them to conceal the Hans Chhap khaini tobacco in various compartments of the vehicles. The vehicles would be handed over to the couriers who would then drive into Singapore.

5 On 10 May 2019, Saravana was found guilty and convicted on five counts for abetting by engaging in a conspiracy with the couriers to import chewing tobacco into Singapore. Two couriers who helped Saravana to bring in the chewing tobacco were convicted and sentenced to six weeks' and four weeks' imprisonment, respectively.

### **Chewing tobacco is strictly prohibited in Singapore**

6 Khaini tobacco is a form of chewing tobacco that is intended to be used by placement in the mouth. It has a distinctive smell and consists of moist, dark brown tobacco leaf, mixed with slaked lime or spices.

7 HSA would like to remind the public that the Tobacco (Control of Advertisements and Sale) Act prohibits the import, distribution, sale or offer for sale of emerging tobacco products. These include shisha tobacco, smokeless tobacco, chewing tobacco such as Gutkha, Khaini, Zarda, vaporisers and their constituents.

8 Any person convicted of an offence is liable to a fine not exceeding \$10,000, or to imprisonment for up to six months or to both, for the first offence and a fine not exceeding \$20,000, or to imprisonment for up to 12 months or to both, for the second or subsequent offence for each count of the offence. Information pertaining to prohibited tobacco products in Singapore is available on HSA's [website](#).

9 The possession, purchase and use of emerging tobacco products is also prohibited in Singapore. Any person convicted is liable to a fine not exceeding \$2,000, for each count of the offence.

10 The public is reminded not to purchase or bring harmful tobacco products into Singapore.

11 HSA encourages members of the public who have information on the prohibited sale of harmful tobacco products to call its Tobacco Regulation Branch at Tel: 66842036 or 66842037 during office hours (9:00am to 5:30pm, Monday to Friday).

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**About the Health Sciences Authority (HSA)**

The Health Sciences Authority (HSA) applies medical, pharmaceutical and scientific expertise through its three professional groups, Health Products Regulation, Blood Services and Applied Sciences, to protect and advance national health and safety. HSA is a multidisciplinary authority. It serves as the national regulator for health products, ensuring they are wisely regulated to meet standards of safety, quality and efficacy. As the national blood service, it is responsible for providing a safe and adequate blood supply. It also applies specialised scientific, forensic, investigative and analytical capabilities in serving the administration of justice. For more details, visit <http://www.hsa.gov.sg/>.

For more updates on public health and safety matters, follow us on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/HSASg](http://www.twitter.com/HSASg).

**About HSA's Health Products Regulation Group**

The Health Products Regulation Group (HPRG) of HSA ensures that drugs, innovative therapeutics, medical devices and health-related products are wisely regulated and meet appropriate safety, quality and efficacy standards. It contributes to the development of biomedical sciences in Singapore by administering a robust, scientific and responsive regulatory framework.

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Importation on 19 June 2018:

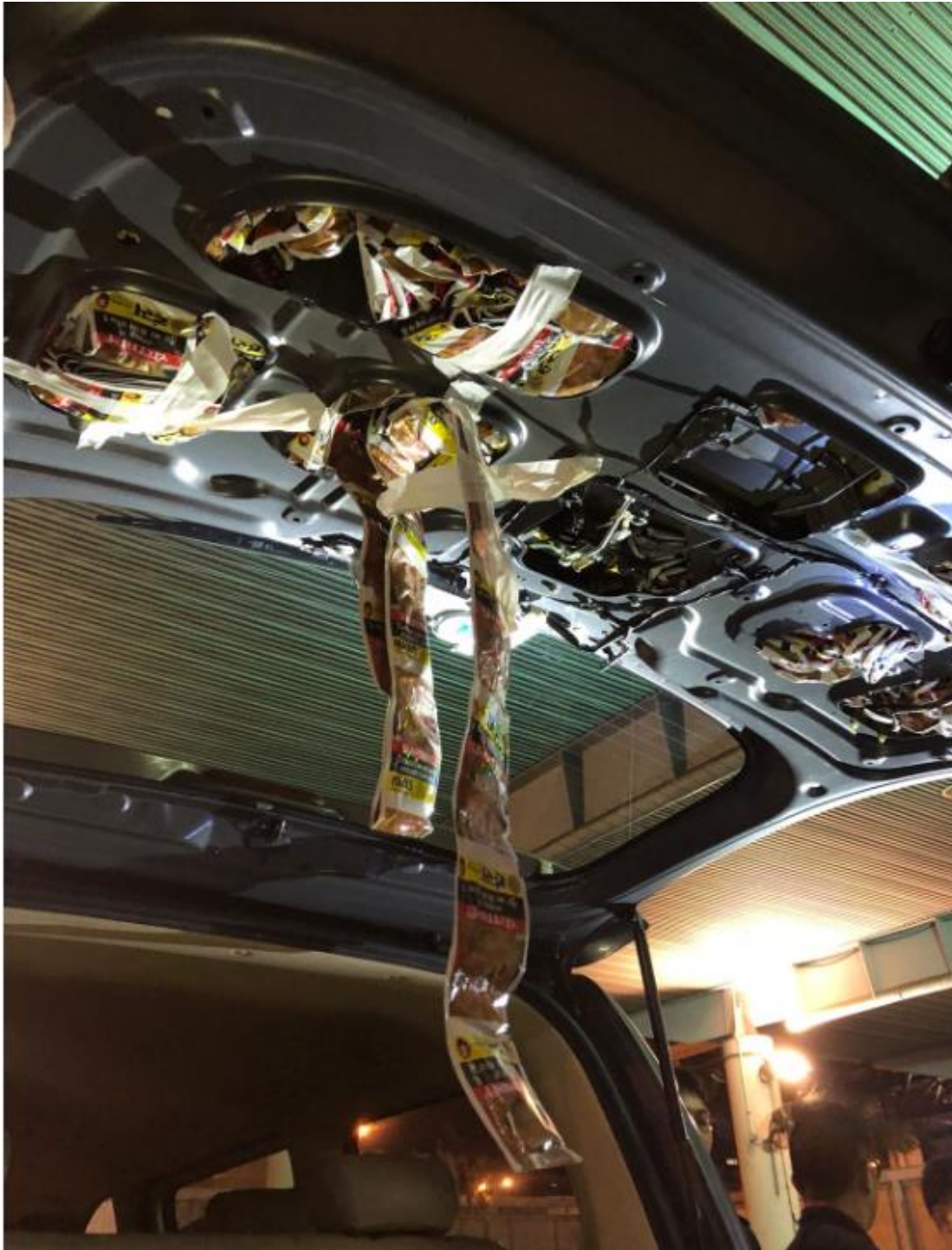


*Image 1: Total exhibits retrieved from vehicle (Picture from HSA)*



*Image 2: Hans Chhap Chewing Tobacco hidden in a compartment of the vehicle (Picture from ICA)*





*Image 3: More prohibited products hidden at the rear end compartment of the vehicle (Picture from ICA)*

**Importation on 27 June 2018:**



*Image 4: Prohibited products retrieved from the vehicle (Picture from ICA)*



*Image 5: Hans Chhap Chewing Tobacco found hidden below driver's seat (Picture from ICA)*

**Importation on 31 Aug 2018:**



*Image 6: Total products seized from vehicle (Picture from ICA)*





*Image 7: Chewing Tobacco hidden in the side compartments of the vehicle (Picture from ICA)*

**Importation on 10 September 2018:**



*Image 8: Hans Chhap Chewing Tobacco hidden at the bottom of the vehicle (Picture from ICA)*



*Image 9: Close-up shot of the hidden products under the vehicle (Picture from ICA)*