

Malaysia makes massive seizure of pangolin scales

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Pangolin scales are used in traditional Chinese medicine, and the animal could have been a possible vector in the novel coronavirus making a leap to humans

Malaysian authorities seized about six tonnes of pangolin scales and smashed a smuggling syndicate, officials said Wednesday, as the country

clamps down on rampant wildlife trafficking.

The pangolin, the world's most heavily trafficked mammal, is believed to have possibly been a vector in the leap of the novel coronavirus from animal to human at a market in China's Wuhan city last year.

Its body parts fetch a high price on the [black market](#) as they are commonly used in traditional Chinese medicine, although scientists say they have no [therapeutic value](#).

The haul was found Tuesday at a port outside the capital Kuala Lumpur, hidden inside a container along with a shipment of cashew nuts, said customs department chief Paddy Abdul Halim.

Officials said they had detained two people for questioning, and the operation had put a smuggling syndicate out of operation.

They could be jailed for up to three years if convicted of breaking [wildlife](#) protection laws.

It was not immediately clear if the scales originally came from Malaysia or elsewhere. Malaysia is often used as a transit point for smuggling wildlife across the region.

Traffic, a group that monitors animal trafficking, praised authorities for "prioritising wildlife even while countries are focused on dealing with the coronavirus pandemic", spokeswoman Elizabeth John said.

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