

Three nabbed by Customs in RM22mil bust

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GEORGE TOWN: Cartons of contraband cigarettes and alcoholic beverages worth nearly RM22mil have been seized following the arrest of three lorry drivers at separate locations in Penang.

Penang Customs director Datuk Rohaizad Ali said the seizure followed several weeks of intelligence gathering, culminating in coordinated operations on Dec 9.

"Customs enforcement officers seized three containers together with lorries at three different locations around Penang, believed to be carrying various brands of smuggled cigarettes and alcoholic beverages, with an estimated total value including duties and taxes of RM21.88mil," he told a press conference at the Customs Department office in Perai yesterday.

He said inspection of the first container at a rest area along the North-South Expressway in Sungai Bakap uncovered 73,200



Illegal cargo: Some of the seized contraband cigarettes on display during a press conference at the Customs Department office in Perai.
— ZHAFARAN NASIB/The Star

cans of beer, with the goods and unpaid duties estimated at RM631,075.50.

"The second container, inspected at a warehouse in Sungai Jawi, uncovered 10,460,000 sticks of

cigarettes of various brands, valued at RM10,651,520 including duties and taxes.

"A further inspection of the third container in Perai led to the discovery of 10,322,000 sticks of

cigarettes of various brands, with an estimated value, including duties and taxes of RM10,595,816.

"Three local lorry drivers aged between 40 and 50 were arrested following the inspections," he added.

Rohaizad said cigarettes and alcoholic beverages are categorised as prohibited imports under Item 1 and Item 3 of Part II, Third Schedule of the Customs (Prohibition of Imports) Order 2023.

He said the case is believed to involve failure to make a proper declaration and is being investigated under Section 135(1)(e) of the Customs Act 1967.

"Documents revealed that the containers originated from Singapore and the goods were headed for the local market.

"If convicted, offenders may be fined not less than ten times the value of the goods or RM100,000, whichever is higher, and not more than 20 times the value of the goods or RM500,000, whichever is higher, or jailed between six months and five years, or both."