



22 APR, 2024

## Folly for smuggling facade

The Star, Malaysia



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Customs find RM3.6mil of illicit cigarettes using plastic toys as cover

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**JOHOR BARU:** Johor Customs scored three successes in the battle against smuggling, with millions in unpaid duty saved.

In the first incident, it seized over 22 million contraband cigarettes at the Port of Tanjung Pelepas (PTP) here on March 26.

The cigarettes, from Cambodia, were stored in two containers. The contraband was estimated at RM3.6mil with unpaid duty at RM14.9mil.

Customs deputy director-general (enforcement/compliance) Datuk Sazali Mohamad, who disclosed this, said the first container was seized at a Customs inspection bay.

"An inspection found 924 master cases containing more than 11 million sticks of illicit cigarettes and 36 boxes of plastic toys.

"Following intelligence gathered, we seized a second container at 10.50am on April 4," he told a press conference at Menara Kastam Johor here yesterday.

Sazali said the second container had 915 master cases which had over 10 million cigarettes, and 33 boxes of plastic toys.

He said initial investigations showed that the same syndicate was involved in both smuggling attempts, using the toys as cover for the contraband.

"The illicit cigarettes were not declared in the Customs forms. Only the plastic toys were declared through Customs Form 6



**Nice try:** Sazali (centre) and other officers showing the seized contraband cigarettes and plastic toys at the state customs building in Johor Baru. — Bernama

in the transshipment manifest and bill of lading.

"The two containers from Cambodia were supposed to head for Mexico," he said.

Sazali said the case was being investigated under Section 133(1) (a) of the Customs Act 1967 and efforts were underway to track down the business owner involved.

In a second case, he said the department foiled an attempt to smuggle out 14,400 duty-free beer cans from Forest City with two suspects arrested.

Sazali said upon a tip-off, his personnel pursued three MPVs from Forest City at about 10pm on

April 15 before detaining the vehicles along Iskandar Puteri highway and Jalan Utama near Kampung Baru Senai.

"We detained the two drivers while the other managed to flee.

"Checks inside the three vehicles found beer cans worth RM38,410 with estimated unpaid duty amounting to RM104,915," he said, adding that the three MPVs used fake registration numbers.

Sazali said investigations revealed that the syndicate used private vehicles to smuggle alcoholic beverages, with their activities mainly conducted at night.

In the third success, Sazali said the department busted an illegal

alcohol manufacturing syndicate that used a terrace house in Skudai as a processing location.

He added that when the raid was carried out on April 2, the premises was locked and unoccupied.

"Following inspection inside, we found various alcohol brands and drums containing liquid suspected to be alcohol. There were also empty bottles and boxes, beverage brand labels, fake Customs stamps and alcohol processing and bottling tools," he added.

Sazali said the estimated value of the seized alcohol was RM41,391 with duty estimated at RM111,720.



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### SUMMARIES

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