

Smuggling ploy foiled

Scanners miss cigarettes but not Customs officers

PORT KLANG: Cigarette smugglers' new tactic of packing their contraband in plastic sacks to avoid detection by scanners failed to get past the watchful eyes of Customs officers.

Their new tactic came to light following the Customs Department's detection and seizure of two container loads of cigarettes at Westport in two raids.

Selangor Customs director Roslan Yusof said the plastic sack cover made it more difficult for scanners to pick up the contents but the culprits had failed to get away with the attempt.

"Our officers are trained to look for other indicators that will show irregularities and this is how we were able to still stop the containers from being taken out of the port," he told a press conference at the Customs office here recently.

He said that in the first raid on Monday, Customs officers who had held a three week-long surveillance foiled an attempt to smuggle 42,800 cartons of Texas-5 brand cigarettes valued at over RM1mil, with taxes amounting to RM3.4mil, in a container.

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ROSLAN YUSOF

The cigarettes had been falsely declared as kitchenware from China.

He said one man had been arrested to help in investigations, adding that checks revealed the company listed as the importer was no longer in operation.

In the second raid this week, Roslan said Customs officers acted successfully on a tip-off that a container was carrying contraband cigarettes valued at over RM1mil.

He said the officers also stopped a third container carrying *bidi* type cigarettes from Bangladesh that were valued at RM300,000, with taxes amounting to RM1.2mil.