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GEORGE TOWN: Packing drugs in tea leaf packages seems to be a new method used by drug traffickers to evade detection.

But their tactics were in vain, as police managed to uncover their latest ruse.

On Tuesday, police in George Town and Ipoh arrested three people and seized over 9kg of methamphetamine valued at close to RM700,000 that were packed to look like tea leaves.

In the first case, a team of policemen from the Narcotic Investigation Department arrested a 43-year-old man after raiding a condominium in Pulau Tikus near here.

The man was picked up after police recovered the packets of drugs, weighing 6.98kg, in his rented condominium.

Penang Police Chief Comm Datuk Wira Chuah Ghee Lye said the suspect placed the crystallised meth-

amphetamine in seven Chinese tea leaf packages and wrapped them with aluminium foil to avoid detection.

"However, we managed to find the drugs, which have a market value of about RM488,600 and were meant to be trafficked to a neighbouring country," he told a press conference at the state police headquarters in Penang Road yesterday.

Comm Chuah said police also confiscated jewellery, a luxury watch, three motorcycles, a car and RM36,800 in cash during the raid.

"We also froze five of the man's bank accounts with savings of about RM60,000. We believe those luxury items and money were his earnings through the drug activities," he added.

He said the suspect was tested positive for methamphetamine and is being remanded until Monday.

In Ipoh, police arrested two men and seized 2.1kg of methamphetamine wrapped like tea leaves along with 2,000 eramin 5 pills during a sting at a condominium.

Perak police chief Datuk Comm Hasnan Hassan said the drugs, worth about RM177,000, were found in a BMW car used by two drug syndicate members.

"A special narcotics task force has been tracking them for two months. We believe they were about to make a delivery to their clients when they were arrested in the parking lot.

"We also seized RM5,000 from the two suspects, aged 37 and 40," he told a press conference at the state police contingent headquarters here yesterday.

Comm Hasnan said the two men were part of a six-man syndicate based in Kuala Lumpur.

Both suspects, from Jinjang, also tested positive for methamphetamine.

"Judging from the amount of drugs they had, they were trusted within the syndicate and were responsible for distributing the drugs in Perak," he added.

Comm Hasnan said police were now on the hunt for four other members of the group.



Busted: Comm Chuah (centre) with state Narcotics Department chief Supt Maidu Abu Bakar (right) and investigating officer Insp Mohd Khairi Mohamed Ali showing the drugs wrapped in tea leaf packages at the Penang police headquarters.