

Tuesday, 19 December 2017

“Killers made no attempt to hide identities’



Forensic investigators gather fingerprints from the victim's car. — Picture by Bernama

JOHOR BARU, Dec 19 — Police have launched a major manhunt for four suspects believed to be members of a drug syndicate involved in the brutal killing of a 44-year-old man at a petrol station in Taman Pelangi that was captured on video.

The victim, known as Tan Ah Choy, was stabbed several times and run over twice by the suspects' car at the scene 500m from the Taman Pelangi police station at 7.30pm on Sunday.

Tan had 13 previous drug records. He was with his Vietnamese girlfriend and was inflating the tyres of his car at the petrol station when the attack took place.

Investigators from the Johor Baru South district police Criminal Investigations Department (serious crimes division) are working on a drug dispute between the suspects and the victim as a possible motive for the murder.

“Initial investigation suggests the victim was involved in drugs, and the suspects are believed to his suppliers,” a police source told *Malay Mail*.

“The dispute between them started when the victim was unable to pay for the supplies he had taken from the syndicate members over several months.”

The source said the suspects became enraged when Tan started avoiding the suspects and also tarnished their name among underworld gangs.

“The fact that the victim was murdered in public by being stabbed and run over by a car twice, clearly shows the suspects had a grudge,” said the source.

“The suspects made no effort to hide their identities ... they probably wanted to send a strong message.”

The attackers, believed to be in their 20s, were identified via visual images after videos of the murder captured by onlookers went viral on social media.

“Apart from the images, we got the lead on the suspects after tracking the registration number of their BMW,” the source said.

“The owner of the car, a man aged 55 from Ipoh, had lodged a report at the Bercham police station yesterday morning, saying his car was repossessed a few months ago after he failed to pay the instalments,” the source said.

The car owner told police he was not in Johor at the time of the incident.

The source said checks on the vehicle showed it was on the repossessors list.

“Our investigation suggests whoever repossessed the car did not declare it to the bank,” the source said, adding the vehicle could have been taken over by a car cloning syndicate.

The source also said police believe the four suspects have links to car clone syndicates and the underworld.

Police will be recording a statement from Tan’s girlfriend.

“She was there during the incident. She saw the victim being attacked and ran to get help,” the source said, adding that the woman is in her 20s.

Johor police chief Datuk Mohd Khalil Kader Mohd said police have identified the suspects.

“Police have initiated efforts to track down and arrest the suspects,” he said in a statement.

Tan’s remains were released from the Sultan Ismail Hospital mortuary at 2.10pm yesterday.

His girlfriend collected his remains after a four-hour post-mortem, in which the cause of death was confirmed to be a stab wound to the heart.