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## Thailand to let our police question smuggling suspects

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Top News

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**BANGKOK** — Thailand's Narcotics Suppression Bureau (NSB) is willing to let its Malaysian counterpart interrogate suspected syndicate members caught in this country while trying to smuggle a large amount of drugs into Malaysia.

Bureau chief Lt-Gen Sommai Kongvisaisuk said this after his men successfully intercepted a lorry carrying watermelons stuffed with 300kg of "ice" (crystal methamphetamine) in Nakhon Ratchasima heading to Narathiwat in southern Thailand last week.

According to the bureau, the drugs were meant to be smuggled into Malaysia via Sungai Golok, a narrow river separating Narathiwat and Rantau Panjang in Kelantan that is infamous for smuggling activities.

"We welcome the Malaysian police if they want to interrogate suspects involved in the trafficking of drugs into the country," Sommai told Bernama.

He said both sides have been exchanging vital information relating to the latest drug seizure, but declined to elaborate.

Sommai said the drugs would probably have been shipped to Australia or Europe upon reaching Malaysia, where the price will double or quadruple, thus guaranteeing maximum profits for the smuggling syndicate.

Three men were arrested in the lorry transporting the watermelons, and four others including two women were nabbed in Yala and Narathiwat in a follow-up police operation.

A Thai police source said they were also investigating the seizure of 200kg of "ice" in Chumphon, southern Thailand, last week and whether it was related to the same syndicate intending to smuggle the 300kg of "ice" into Malaysia.

"The style and colour of the drug packaging were nearly identical, leading



The three men caught in the lorry transporting watermelons stuffed with 'ice' on their way to southern Thailand. It is believed the drugs were destined for Malaysia. — Picture by Bernama

us to suspect the same syndicate was behind it," the source said, adding that both drug consignments were destined for southern Thailand en route to Malaysia.

Sommai also said Bangkok and Putrajaya had long and well-established cooperation in the fight against drug syndicates and drug smuggling.

"If we cannot intercept them (the drug smugglers), the Malaysian police will wait for them," he said.

Besides Malaysia, Thailand received good cooperation from Myanmar and Laos in stamping out the flow of drugs, especially from the Golden Triangle.

For decades, the Golden Triangle, which straddles the border areas of northern Thailand, Laos and Myanmar, has been one of the two top opium-producing regions in Asia besides Afghanistan. Now it has also become one of the world's foremost producers of synthetic drugs.

Another source told Bernama that Thai anti-drug officers had been in constant contact with their Malaysian counterparts, especially officers stationed along the border areas.

"We have been exchanging information with the Malaysians in order to track down the mastermind," he said, but declined to reveal his identity due to the sensitivity of the information.