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Thais seize 700kg 'ice' in fruits bound for south



A lorry laden with watermelons in which 300kg of 'ice' were concealed seized by Thai authorities in January. The three people in the lorry were arrested. —Picture by Bernama

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BANGKOK — Authorities at the Malaysia-Thai border need to keep an eye on vehicles transporting mouth-watering fruits bound south of the border.

This revelation came about after Thai police uncovered yet another attempt by drug syndicates to smuggle 700kg of "ice" (crystal methamphetamine) worth millions of ringgit into Malaysia using a lorry transporting pineapples and watermelons.

Narcotics Suppression Bureau (NSB) head Lt-Gen Sommai Kongvisaisuk said the Thai-registered lorry was stopped at one of the security checkpoints in Chumphon, southern Thailand, at about 1.30am (local time) yesterday.

"Upon checking the lorry, the officers

were surprised to discover 700kg of 'ice' hidden among hundreds of pineapples and watermelons stuffed inside the lorry," he told Bernama, adding that the lorry driver has been detained for further questioning.

Sommai said the drugs originated from northern Thailand and were destined for Malaysia where it probably would be exported to other destinations where the contraband could fetch a higher price.

He did not provide further details but the authorities believed the 700kg seizure was one of the biggest this year.

Transporting drugs in lorries carrying fruits or agriculture produce has become one of the favoured tactics used by the drug syndicates lately.

In January, police intercepted a lorry in

Nakhon Ratchasima in northeast Thailand and discovered 300 kg of "ice" hidden among hundreds of watermelons inside the southern Thailand-bound vehicle.

The Narcotics Suppression Bureau also believed the drugs were meant to be smuggled across the border into Malaysia after reaching southern Thailand.

In June last year, Thai authorities stopped a lorry transporting hundreds of durians in Hatyai and discovered 306kg of cannabis hidden among the fruit, which they believed were bound for Malaysia.

According to Thai officers, the syndicate wanted to take advantage of the pungent smell to ward off close inspection from the authorities.