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## China bags biggest coke haul

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1.3 tonnes from South America seized and 10 detained

**BEIJING:** Chinese police have seized 1.3 tonnes of cocaine from South America in the country's biggest ever haul of the drug, authorities said.

Police in the southern city of Shenzhen have detained 10 suspects, mostly from Hong Kong, following an investigation that began in July 2017, the Guangdong province public security department said.

The statement, released on Tuesday, called it the "biggest amount of cocaine seized in the country".

The official Xinhua news agency said the massive haul had a street value of one billion yuan (RM618.6mil).

The drug came from an unidentified South American country and was shipped to the Guangdong port of Shanwei.

The police statement, released on Tuesday, did not say whether the drug was destined for the Chinese market or another country, but cocaine use is low in China compared to other drugs.

A 2017 government report found that China had 2.5 million drug users, with 60% consuming synthetic drugs, 38% using opiates and 1.4% using cocaine and marijuana.

Cocaine originates in the Andes but China is believed to be one of the main manufacturers of synthetic drugs, including opioids such as fentanyl - which have



**Contraband:** A police officer standing guard next to the seized drugs in Shenzhen, Guangdong province. — Reuters

been blamed for public health crises in the United States, Canada and Australia, among other countries.

The Shenzhen investigation began in July 2017 after police received a tip related to drug trafficking, the Guangdong public secu-

rity statement said.

A month later, a task force learned that gangs were about to conduct a "large scale" drug delivery.

Five suspects, including three from Hong Kong, were detained and 40kg of cocaine were seized.

In February, the investigation led to the arrest of three more suspects and the seizure of another 1.291kg of cocaine.

The two suspected ringleaders were captured in an unidentified foreign country in March and returned to China. — AFP