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BANGKOK: A Penangite suspected of being the key member of a drug syndicate has been described as a brutal enforcer who never hesitated to torture members of the syndicate who failed to carry out his orders.

The 44-year-old man was detained at the Suvarnabhumi International Airport two days ago by heavily armed Thai police as he was about to board a flight back to Malaysia.

A Thai police source who was involved in the interrogation, said

the man beat and tortured friends of two syndicate members who failed to smuggle drugs into Malaysia late last year.

"He tortured the members' friends and sent the chilling images of the torture via smartphone to the two members after finding out about their failure to smuggle drugs into Malaysia," said the source who declined to reveal his identity.

Two Malaysian syndicate members were nabbed by Thai police in December last year in Chumphon, southern Thailand with 140 bars of

heroin weighing 52.4kg and 41.9kg of "Crystal" *Methamphetamine* stashed in their car.

"His arrest two days ago was a culmination of police efforts since late last year," said the source, adding that the man described as a "big fish" has been under surveillance by the authorities since he arrived in Thailand around two weeks ago.

The source also disclosed that the man spoke fluent Thai and maintained an exclusive condominium in Bangkok which he shared with his girlfriend and also carried a

pistol wherever he went in Thailand.

"He also has a fake Thai identity card," he said, adding that the man led a wealthy lifestyle when in Thailand.

The source said the man was in northern Thailand recently to order drugs but the negotiations with an unidentified party failed to materialise, prompting him to fly back to Bangkok.

The source also said the suspect admitted travelling to Thailand at least 10 times a year.

He also confessed that he had been in the drug business for over 20 years and has been imprisoned by Malaysia twice.

The man was brought to the Criminal Court yesterday under heavy escort by the police for remand.

His arrest followed another high-profile arrest of a Malaysian dubbed "Mr T" from Johor, who is also suspected to be a key member of an international drug syndicate, last Wednesday at the Haadyai airport. — Bernama