

## Thai police smash Malaysian drugs train gang

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Thai police show proof of the 15 arrested Malaysians and seized heroin and methamphetamine at a news conference in Bangkok yesterday

**BANGKOK:** A gang of 15 Malaysians has been arrested in Thailand for trying to smuggle millions of dollars worth of heroin and methamphetamine by train, police said Thursday.

Investigators said the group was moving drugs from northern Thailand to Butterworth.

"This gang chose to transport drugs by train rather than by car because transporting by car is riskier as there are several checkpoints," Lieutenant General Thitiraj Nhongharnpitak, commander of Thailand's Central Investigation Bureau, told reporters.

Railway police made an initial arrest on Wednesday afternoon following a tip-off, taking in two suspects allegedly in possession of 23kg of methamphetamine.

Their detention led to subsequent raids along the trainline between Thailand and Malaysia, with 12 more suspects arrested and a total of 226kg of methamphetamine and eight kilos of heroin seized, police said.

Those arrested were all men and held a mixture of ethnic Malay and Chinese names, according to a list provided by Thai police.

Thailand is both a producer and major transit hub for drugs.

Much of the regional drug manufacturing takes place in the Golden Triangle, a remote border region where Myanmar, Laos and Thailand all meet.

Seizures of methamphetamine have quadrupled across the Asia-Pacific region over five years, the United Nations says.

Much of the increase is down to an explosion in production of the usually less pure meth tablets, known in parts of Asia as "yaba". — *AFP*