

Four nabbed in RM22mil car case

Customs detain company owners over alleged vehicle import breaches

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JOHOR BARU: Four company owners have been arrested by the Customs Department for allegedly violating vehicle import laws involving 42 cars worth more than RM22mil.

Johor Customs director Aminul Izmeer Mohd Sohaimi said the male suspects were arrested during statewide operations from Jan 5 to Feb 6.

"During the period, we conducted 341 inspections and opened 21 investigation papers.

"The investigation involved 42 vehicles, among them luxury cars imported from Japan and the United Kingdom," he told a press conference at the state Customs headquarters here yesterday.

Aminul Izmeer said the 42 seized vehicles had an estimated value of RM7.6mil, with unpaid taxes amounting to RM14.3mil,



Big haul: Aminul Izmeer (second from left) inspecting some of the 42 seized vehicles suspected of import law violation during a press conference. — THOMAS YONG/The Star

bringing the total value and tax amount to over RM22mil.

He said the vehicles, which do not have licence plates, were

stored in bonded warehouses.

"As the vehicles have yet to be taxed, importers are allowed to store them in bonded warehou-

ses for up to 24 months, with a possible extension of another 12 months.

"However, our inspections found that some of the vehicles had exceeded the permitted storage period, thus violating the law.

"We also discovered that several vehicles were taken out of the warehouse without Customs' approval," he said.

Aminul Izmeer added that imported vehicles stored in bonded warehouses are required to pay taxes and duties immediately upon being removed from the premises.

"The taxes must be settled before the vehicles can be used or sold in the local market," he said.

The case is being investigated under Section 65 of the Customs Act 1967 for breaching storage period conditions and tax claims, Section 75 of the same Act for

removing goods under Customs control without permission and Section 135(1)(d) for possessing or storing prohibited imported goods.

Separately, the department raided a warehouse in Kulai and uncovered 572,928 cans of beer valued at RM2.5mil, with duties amounting to RM12.2mil.

"The cartons of beer, likely imported from China, were kept in five containers when the department raided the empty premises at about 11pm on Jan 20.

"We believe the syndicate was using the warehouse to store the illicit goods before distributing them to the market," said Aminul Izmeer.

He added that efforts to identify and locate the warehouse owner are still ongoing as part of the investigations under Section 135(1)(d) of the Customs Act 1967.