

# VIETNAM COPS SEIZE 665KG CANNABIS, 93KG RHINO HORNS

Drug found hidden in container shipped from S'pore, and horns at warehouse near airport

## HANOI

**I**N two separate operations, Vietnamese police seized large amounts of cannabis and rhinoceros horns.

In the first operation on Dec 11, police in northern Hai Phong city seized 665.2kg of cannabis found hidden inside a container shipped from Singapore to Vietnam.

The dried cannabis was found inside packages labelled "Food

Storage Naturally — MAGIC VAC — made in Italy" hidden inside a container carrying raw materials for animal feed production.

According to a Vn Express report, the container was shipped to the Lach Huyen port in Hai Phong on Dec 11. The receiving company moved the container from the port to the company's warehouse after clearing Customs checks.

However, police and Customs personnel later flagged the container as being suspicious and ordered an inspection.

Cannabis is on the list of narcotics forbidden in Vietnam and those producing, transporting, trading or storing it face between one and 10 years in prison.

In another case, police seized 93kg of what is believed to be African rhinoceros horns from a

warehouse near Ho Chi Minh City's Tan Son Nhat International Airport on Tuesday.

The Environmental Crime Prevention and Fighting Police Department tracked down the horns in collaboration with the city police.

The warehouse belongs to the state-owned Sai Gon Cargo Service Corporation. The horns had been sent to Vietnam from the Philippines in 12 packages in two air shipments.

Police have not revealed the identities of the recipients nor those who sent it, but said they would probe into the horns' origin, now assumed to be Africa.

If they are indeed African rhino horns, police say, they are worth more than 40 billion Vietnam dollars (US\$1.72 million) on the black market.

The international trade in rhino horn has been banned since 1977 under the Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species. Yet, according to United Kingdom's conservation charity, Save the Rhino, individual countries are able to determine whether to allow or prohibit the sale of rhino horns in their countries.

Although rhino horns are banned in Vietnam, the country remains one of the biggest consumers with people believing it has powers to cure diseases like cancer. Rhino horn consumption has also become a status symbol in the country.

Last month, a Ho Chi Minh City court sentenced a man to six years in jail for illegally transporting over 6kg of rhino horns from Mozambique.