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GOF Northern Brigade Busts Illegal E-waste Plant, Seizes RM21.8 Mln Worth Of Materials

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BUKIT MERTA JAM, Feb 7 (Bernama) -- The General Operations Force (GOF) Northern Brigade has successfully dismantled an illegal e-waste processing plant, seizing various materials, worth RM21.83 million in Perkampungan Machang Bubuk, yesterday.

Acting on a public tip-off and two weeks of intelligence gathering, a team raided the illegal plant at 7.30 pm, uncovering e-waste materials, along with machinery used for processing them.

Northern Brigade Commander SAC Shahrum Hashim said that the operation, conducted by the 1st Battalion Intelligence Branch in collaboration with the Penang Department of Environment (DOE), also led to the arrest of 11 foreign workers at the site.

"We received information about illegal e-waste processing activities in the area, and conducted intelligence operations, including drone surveillance, to monitor the facility, which was located along the main road and within an oil palm plantation," he said.

During the raid, 11 foreigners were detained, including a Chinese woman who managed the operation, nine Myanmar nationals – six of whom were women – and a Bangladeshi man, all aged between 30 and 40.

Shahrum said that initial checks revealed that only the Chinese woman had a passport, though it had expired, while the other 10 foreigners lacked valid travel documents.

The raid uncovered 48 jumbo-sized bags containing 500,000 kg of e-waste, including copper, along with several processing machines, purchased three months ago. The factory was engaged in separating and crushing e-waste before transferring it elsewhere for further processing.

Authorities also found hazardous e-waste residues scattered on the ground, posing environmental risks, especially during rain. Investigations suggest that the e-waste was imported from multiple countries, possibly smuggled in containers under false declarations.

The plant initially operated legally as a plastic recycling facility from 2016 to 2022, before being rented out to another local individual. It is suspected that the premises were subleased to a Chinese national in 2023 for illegal e-waste processing.

Foreign workers at the factory were paid RM2,500 to RM4,000, based on commission, and are now being investigated under the Immigration Act 1959/1963.

Meanwhile, Penang DOE director Norazizi Adinan confirmed that the seizure was the department's largest success to date. The e-waste, suspected to contain hazardous heavy metals, has been categorised as scheduled waste SW110-E-Waste and SW104.

He said that samples have been sent to the Chemistry Department for analysis, and the case is being investigated under the Environmental Quality Act 1974.

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