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Bitcoin mining operation smashed

Syndicate suspected to have caused over RM8mil losses to TNB

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PASIR GUDANG: A bitcoin mining operation suspected to have caused more than RM8mil losses to Tenaga Nasional Berhad (TNB) due to electricity theft has been smashed by the authorities.

An operation was carried out by the police and TNB in several locations in the state on Monday and Tuesday.

State police chief Comm Datuk Ayob Khan Mydin Pitchay said 1,746 units of bitcoin mining machines worth RM2.6mil were seized from 21 premises in Johor Baru, Seri Alam, Tangkak and Muar.

Police arrested seven individuals, between the ages of 24 and 64 years, during the operation, he said at a press conference at the Seri Alam

police district headquarters here yesterday.

Investigations revealed that the bitcoin syndicate had been active since the beginning of last year, causing TNB to suffer RM8.6mil in losses due to electricity theft.

"The arrested suspects had acted as caretakers of the premises. We are still looking for others involved in the operation, including the syndicate's mastermind."

"There is also a possibility that this syndicate has links with other similar syndicates operating in other states," said Comm Ayob.

He noted that Johor TNB had suffered losses of about RM90mil in 2020 alone due to electricity theft linked to bitcoin mining.

The latest case is being investigated under Section 379/427 of the Penal Code for electricity theft and

causing mischief to TNB's properties.

In an unrelated matter, Comm Ayob said 622 people from the Johor police contingent had been placed under quarantine since March last year due to Covid-19.

Of that number, 318 of them had tested positive while the rest were close contacts.

"To date, a total of 318 individuals from the Johor police and their family members have tested positive for Covid-19."

"This included 26 officers and 158 personnel, 23 civil servants and 111 of their family members," he said.

He said 304 close contacts of positive patients were also quarantined during the same period.

This included 56 officers and 152 personnel, 47 civil servants and 49 of their family members.



Incriminating evidence: Comm Ayob showing some of the seized items during a press conference at the Pasir Gudang police headquarters.