

## Higher demand for pangolin meat as cold spell hits China

**ALOR SETAR:** The number of pangolins smuggled to China increases when the weather there turns cold, according to the authorities.

Kedah Department of Wildlife and National Parks director Muhammad Ali Che Aman said many believe that exotic pangolin meat has medicinal value and keeps the body warm.

He said, however, that there was no scientific evidence to show pangolin meat has medicinal value.

He also said his department and the Kedah Border Security Agency seized 140 live pangolins and five sacks of pangolin scales, worth RM525,000 in two separate operations on Tuesday.

Two Malaysian men were arrested in the operations, which took place in a house at Kampung Darat Changloon, Kedah at about 7.45am

on Tuesday and near the Bukit Kayu Hitam checkpoint at about 2.30pm the same day, he added.

The men have been remanded for four days from yesterday.

Muhammad Ali said the smuggling of exotic animals such as pangolins will be on the rise as long as the demand is great.

"The returns are also high as pangolin meat could fetch between RM250 and RM300 per kg for overseas markets, and can even go up to five times higher."

He also said the average weight of a pangolin is about 2.5kg.

"The pangolins are believed to have been smuggled in from Indonesia to Malaysia, then to Thailand before they are moved to their final destination in China," he said.

Muhammad Ali added that Kedah

was a favourite route for pangolins and other exotic animals, including the blackpond turtle, to be smuggled out as its highway leads directly to Bukit Kayu Hitam.

He said investigations revealed that runners for the syndicates smuggling the pangolins use luxury cars with tinted screens to evade the authorities.

"Often these runners would change their cars from point to point so that the authorities would not be able to keep track of the marked car.

"The pangolins would then be kept in a transit house before they are smuggled into Thailand," he said.

Muhammad Ali added that the state has so far seen five cases, where 399 pangolins worth RM1.5mil were rescued.



**Saved in time:** Muhammad Ali (left) showing the pangolins that were rescued by the Kedah Department of Wildlife and National Parks. — Bernama