

More messages linked to cartel leaked

KUALA LUMPUR: More screenshots of WhatsApp conversations between agents of a meat cartel and government officers have been leaked to the *New Straits Times*.

The messages appear to be a continuation of a series of conversations which the NST had published earlier this month that showed how the cartel's agents sought help from government officers to allow containers with uncertified frozen beef to exit the ports.

In the latest messages, a government officer linked to the syndicate is seen warning the cartel's agents of the possibility that one of its consignments could be checked for irregularities.

The agent had shared a picture of the item with the officer to show that it had cleared official checks. The box bore a certified halal logo.

It is understood that the con-

signment of frozen beef, imported from an Asian country, did not meet the necessary requirements to enable it to be released from the port.

The government officer, upon realising this, appeared to panic and asked if other officers (not linked to the syndicate) based at the port had taken samples of the beef for testing.

"This is dangerous. Did they take any samples? So lucky.

"Have they opened and taken samples?" the officer asked the agent.

It is unknown whether samples were taken as the reply from the agent came in the form of a voice note. However, the image showed that the box had been wrapped with stickers from a government agency, indicating that it had been cleared to leave the port.

A source familiar with the investigation said the conversation

demonstrated the ease with which corrupt officers were able to warn the syndicate's agents on what to do and how to avoid scrutiny by the authorities.

Another series of screenshots, meanwhile, showed a conversation between the syndicate's members after they had successfully brought out the consignment from the port.

The message thread showed how the syndicate members received instructions from their boss to repack the supply, understood to be imported frozen beef bones, into new boxes which feature legitimate halal-certified logos.

The messages also detailed how a lorry would ferry the 800 to 900 boxes of repacked bones to distributors and the local market.

The source told the NST that the conversations demonstrated how the syndicate ran their activities with the aid of corrupt



WhatsApp conversations between a government officer and an agent of the meat cartel.

government officials.

"When the items have been mixed, they are difficult to trace and they have been repacked with legitimate halal labels.

"This is how agents cut deals with officers to ensure that their operations run without any trouble from the authorities," said the source.