

Attempt to smuggle rare crabs foiled in Jambi

Jambi Police officers seized 2,935 horseshoe crabs, locally known as belangkas or mimi, in an operation on Friday.

A truck loaded with the crabs, which are declared protected species by the government, was intercepted by the officers when it crossed into the Aur Duri area.

Jambi Police spokesman AKBP Almansyah said the truck, with police number BK 9336 SF, was headed for Medan, North Sumatra, from Palembang, South Sumatra.

“On Feb.14, the truck headed for Medan from Palembang. We have detained the truck driver, Oly Suwondo, and seized the crabs as evidence,” he said.

According to Almansyah, during the interrogation, the driver said that the protected species belonged to a man with the initial M, while the identity of the intended recipient in Medan remained unknown.

“The driver said he was told to bring the crabs to Medan. Once he arrived in Medan, he would receive further instructions about who he was to deliver the crabs to,” said Almansyah.

He said the Jambi Police had coordinated with the Jambi Natural Resources Conservation Agency (BKSDA) as the material evidence seized concerned protected species.

BKSDA Jambi chief Tri Siswo confirmed the crabs seized by police during the operation were horseshoe crabs.

“To make sure, we will send samples of the species to the Indonesian Institute of Sciences [LIPI],” he said.

Meanwhile, Oly said he was paid Rp 3.5 million (US\$362.24) for transporting the load to Medan. He claimed he did not know the load contained thousands of horseshoe crabs.

“I didn’t even know they are protected species,” said Oly.

In the delivery note, it was said that the load contained 2,935 horseshoe crabs. To deceive law enforcers, the sender placed the horseshoe crabs in sacks filled with snails. All of the tails of the horseshoe crabs were also cut so that they did not look like the protect-

ed species.

“According to the BKSDA, we could determine whether they were horseshoe crabs by looking at their tails. Unfortunately, their tails were all cut,” said Almansyah.

He said the perpetrators could face sanctions under Law No.5/1990 on natural resources and ecosystem conservation. (ebf)