

Malaysia seizes million-dollar ivory shipment

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Malaysian custom officers handle elephant tusks seized in the port of Klang on December 13. Malaysia has seized elephant tusks and ivory handicrafts worth an estimated four million ringgit (\$1.3 million) en route from Kenya to Cambodia, a customs official said Tuesday.

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The haul is the latest to indicate Malaysia has become an Asian transit hub in the illicit ivory trade, and follows the seizure of hundreds of African elephants' tusks in several busts by Malaysian authorities in recent months.

Customs inspectors seized the container last Thursday in Klang, Malaysia's biggest port, after it was unloaded from a cargo ship.

"The cargo manifest said the container contained handicrafts (soapstone) and it was loaded in Mombasa port in Kenya," Azis Yacub, state customs director of the state of Selangor, where the port is located, said in a statement.

Officials also found carved elephant and rhinoceros ivory.

Azis said the container's final destination was the port of Sihanoukville in Cambodia.

In August, Hong Kong authorities seized nearly two tonnes of elephant ivory worth about \$1.7 million in a shipment from Malaysia, which [wildlife trade](#) monitoring network TRAFFIC has described as a major hub for illicit wildlife products.

TRAFFIC says that the illegal [ivory trade](#) has been rising globally since 2004 largely due to increasing demand in China, where ivory is often ground up and used in [traditional medicine](#).

International trade in [elephant ivory](#) was banned in 1990, but since then several auctions of tusks from elephants that died naturally or were seized from poachers have been permitted in Namibia, Botswana and South Africa.

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