

Over 12 bales of clothes sneaked through Lake Kivu into Rwanda from DR Congo were seized by the Police (RNP) Marine Unit on Tuesday, May 31.

RNP say that they arrested the smuggler identified as Theogene Birikunzira, 41, at about 6:30 am on the shores in Rubona Village, Nyarusange Cell of Kirimbi Sector, Nyamasheke District.

Other goods seized from Birikunzira, include 85 pairs of second-hand shoes, 97 pieces of outlawed plastic bags, 54 pieces of Movit Baby Jelly, 124 pieces of assorted banned skin bleaching products and 20 litres of petroleum.

The arrest and seizure of the smuggled goods followed credible information provided by residents earlier that day, according to Superintendent of Police (SP) Bonaventure Twizere Karekezi, the Police spokesperson for the Western region.

“Police marine had prior information that Birikunzira was to smuggle assorted goods into Rwanda from DRC, through Lake Kivu. The informer also guided marine officers Birikunzira’s arrival spot on the shores, and that is where he was arrested on arrival,” SP Karekezi said.

The suspect and exhibits were handed over to RIB at Nkombo station for further investigation.

Under article 199 of the East African Community Management Act, which is also applicable in Rwanda, seized smuggled goods and automobiles used in smuggling are auctioned. The driver also faces a fine of US\$5,000.

Rwanda banned second hand clothes imports in 2018. The ban was aimed at boosting its textile industry.

Manufacturing, use, importation or sale of plastic carry bags and single-use plastic items are prohibited under article 3 of law N° 17/2019 of 10/08/2019.

Under article 10, any person, who imports plastic carry bags and single-use plastic items is liable to the dispossession of those plastic carry bags and such items, and to an administrative fine equivalent to ten times the value of those plastic carry bags and single-use plastic items.

The suspect is liable to face prison for a term of not less than one year and not more than two years and a fine of not less than Frw3 million and not more than

Frw5 million or one of these penalties.