

The Rwanda Revenue Authority (RRA) department of Revenue Protection Unit (RPU) impounded a vehicle with six bales of smuggled used clothes into the country, senior officials have said.

The smuggled goods were seized in Muhanga district, Nyarusange Sector in Musongati Cell on Saturday.

Superintendent of Police (SP) Theobard Kanamugire, the Police spokesperson for the Southern region, said that the bales had been trafficked into the country from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) through Lake Kivu.

The driver of the Toyota Corolla plate number RAB 561A, identified as Emmanuel Ntigurirwa, 34, is now arrested.

"Ntigurirwa was a suspended smuggler supplying second-hand clothes, especially to traders in Muhanga market. It was just a matter of time for him to be arrested red-handed," SP Kanamugire said.

He added that RPU, which had received prior credible information that Ntigurirwa was transporting a new consignment of smuggled clothes, trailed him to Muhanga where he was arrested on arrival at about 5 am, with the six bales.

Ntigurirwa disclosed that he was hired by a trader in the Muhanga market to transport the clothes from Nyamasheke District. He was to be paid Frw70000 after delivering the smuggled goods, he added.

The vehicle and the goods were impounded to Rwanda Revenue Authority (RRA) offices in Muhanga while the suspected smuggler was handed over to RIB at Muhanga station for further investigations.

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

The suspect is likely to face between six months and two years in prison.

Since banning second hand clothes imports in 2018, the country has seen an increase in demand which is leading to smuggling.