

Spain police arrest Chinese mafia members and also stop Portuguese fakes

Chinese mafia gangs

Police in Spain have arrested at least 80 people in a nationwide crackdown on Chinese mafia gangs.

The operation, involving more than 300 officers, focused on money-laundering and connected illegal activities such as tax evasion.

Officers searched 100 places - mainly in the capital Madrid and in Barcelona.

A Madrid councillor was among those arrested.

The councillor is from the Fuenlabrada district, which is home to the huge Cobo Calleja trading estate, considered the biggest Chinese wholesale hub in Europe.

Spanish newspapers published photographs of police carrying out raids at Chinese businesses in the neighbourhood, known as a source of cheap goods from China.

In a statement, the Spanish interior ministry said: "The national police is carrying out a major operation against money-laundering and other crimes linked to criminal networks of Chinese origin in various provinces of Spain.

Portuguese fakes

Police have also arrested 99 people over the sale of 235 tonnes of fake designer clothes and shoes in Spain, officials say.

Counterfeit items were made in illegal factories in Portugal and then shipped to distributors in north-western Spain, Spain's interior ministry said.

Sales generated profits of 5.5m euros (\$7.5m, £4.6m) over two years, it said.

Police seized more than a million fake items in Spanish.

They also confiscated 60 bank cards, several weapons and software containing the logos of more than 200 registered brands.

Officers in northern Portugal closed 10 illegal factories where the fake goods were made.