

CHENNAI

DRI seizes 32.24 kg gold smuggled from Sri Lanka

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Six persons who allegedly transported the gold arrested

In three different operations in less than 24 hours, special teams of the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence, Chennai Zonal Unit, seized 32.249 kg of gold smuggled into India with the help of fishing boats from Sri Lanka. The gold was meant for sale in Chennai.

Acting on a tip-off, DRI officials mounted surveillance in the Mannady area on Tuesday evening and intercepted a motorcyclist who was carrying a suspicious baggage. The suspect admitted to have received the consignment containing 12.149 kg gold smuggled from Sri Lanka. The same night, a passenger who arrived here in a private bus from Keelakarai was found to be in possession of 8.1 kg gold and arrested. Early on Wednesday, the officers apprehended two suspects who were in possession of 12 kg of gold near a mansion. They told investigators that the consignment was handed over to them by a person who arrived from Thoothukudi and was staying in the mansion. Two persons, including a woman, who came from Thoothukudi the previous night, were taken into custody. A total of 32.249 kg of gold worth ₹10.215 crore was seized in the three operations. Six persons who allegedly transported the smuggled gold to Chennai for monetary considerations were arrested.

Recurrent issue

A DRI statement said that gold smuggling was a recurrent issue in South India and the coastal areas of Tamil Nadu were particularly prone to the illicit activity, due to their geographical proximity to Sri Lanka. In the previous financial year alone (2017-18), DRI Chennai Zonal Unit had seized more than 105 kg of gold smuggled from Sri Lanka to India through the Tamil Nadu coast. The areas vulnerable to the smuggling activity were the stretches from Tiruchendur to Rameswaram, and from Rameswaram to Vedaranyam. It was suspected that the smuggling was facilitated by country boats and small fishing boats.

Apart from enforcement measures such as seizures and arrests, the DRI had taken up the issues of smuggling and other customs matters at the policy level, by hosting the 28th Indo-Sri Lanka DG-level talks at New Delhi in February this year. Both the administrations had firmly resolved to combat smuggling, the statement said.