

Eagle-eyed intelligence officer selected for President's medal

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COIMBATORE: In a career spanning more than 11 years, A. Shanmugaraj, an intelligence officer in the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence's (DRI) Coimbatore unit, seized narcotics and golds worth over Rs 200 crore and arrested 60 people. The 57-year-old officer has been selected for the prestigious President's medal for meritorious service. He will receive the award on the Republic Day next year.

In 2008, Shanmugaraj recalled a Singapore-bound SilkAir flight that took off from the Coimbatore airport and seized 27kg ketamine hydrochloride, a narcotic drug worth over Rs 2.5 crore in the international market, from a passenger.

It was just one of his remarkable works, his DRI colleagues said. So far, he has helped the department seize narcotic drugs like heroin, ephedrine, methamphetamine and ketamine hydrochloride worth Rs 97 crore and more than 150kg gold worth Rs 50 crore smuggled through Sri Lanka for sale in the coastal areas of Tamil Nadu.

"Identifying the concealed gold is a challenging task. Smugglers hide the yellow metal inside iron boxes and compressors. Unless the boxes are opened and gold is melted and tested, the smuggled gold could not be seized. While dealing with flights, timing is very crucial and time management is important," a department source told TOI.

Shanmugaraj had seized sandalwood logs and red sanders, which are endangered flora, worth Rs 9 crore and electronic goods worth Rs 2 crore, which were brought in bulk quantity under the guise of household articles. He also played an important role in registering multiple commercial fraud cases involving more than Rs 100 crore against certain exporters and importers. About Rs 74 crore was recovered till date, the source added.