

Haul of ganja, gold keeps DRI engaged

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Ganja and gold kept India's anti-smuggling units on toes last fiscal. If the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) seized 10,000 kg ganja more in 2017-18 than the fiscal preceding it, the seizure of gold more than doubled during the same period.

The DRI seized a whopping 26,785 kg ganja in 2017-18 in comparison to 16,197 kg in 2016-17. Incidentally, the seizures of psychotropic substances, mostly made in South India, accounted for 50 per cent of the haul.

As for gold, 3,223 kg of the yellow metal worth ₹974 crore was seized in comparison to 1,422 kg worth ₹472 crore in 2016-17. Majority of gold seizures was from the four metros which are high consumption centres.

In fact, the agency carried out a major operation on Thursday and Friday in Lucknow and Siliguri (West Bengal) and seized 66 kg gold worth ₹21 crore and arrested four persons who are being questioned on the larger net-

work involved in the illicit business. The gold was smuggled from the India-Bhutan border.

In 2017-18 fiscal, the agency even busted four major factories involved in manufacturing of synthetic drugs in Tamil Nadu, Telangana and Maharashtra leading to major seizures of Ketamine, Mephedrone, Ephedrine and Alprazolam. Syndicates involved in manufacture, packaging, transport and possible export of psychotropic substances and synthetic drugs were neutralised. "Synthetic drugs pose an emerging threat to South-Asia in general and India in particular," the agency warned in its latest report.

The report, published by DRI, revealed that in case of illicit drugs, the number of seizures in the last fiscal increased to 78, up from 64 in 2016-17. Ganja is mostly transported through commercial vehicles by concealments in false partitions, secret cavities and undercover cargo to avoid detection by law enforcement agencies.

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DRI's intelligence and interception of goods violating Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) indicate that majority of these products originate from China. The counterfeit goods then make their way into the country either through containerised cargo by sea or air route or through porous and off-routes through the land borders with Nepal, Bhutan and Myanmar. Counterfeit commodities most prone to smuggling in India are cosmetics, shoes, watches, sunglasses, auto parts like spark plugs, hand bags and mobile phone accessories, the report said.

The DRI also seized 42.6 million smuggled cigarette sticks valued at ₹34.29 crore. The agency also detected 940 cases of commercial frauds involving a duty amount of ₹3,064 crore.

DRI's analysis indicates that a large part of the domestic gold market is being served by illicit smuggling of gold. Large quantities of smuggled gold reaches Kolkata from India's land border with Myanmar and Bhutan and is then transited to other metropolitan cities. In terms of the State-wise seizures in 2017-18, the maximum number of seizures was made in Northeastern States followed by Delhi, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Maharashtra.

Commercial frauds detected during the period include mis-declaration, mis-invoicing, misuse of preferential /free trade agreements and misuse of export incentive schemes by the involved entities.