

NATION, CRIME

DRI Chennai zone seizes gold, red sanders, wildlife products

DECCAN CHRONICLE.

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Some of the seized items. (DC)

Chennai: The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence, Chennai zone, have busted multiple smuggling gangs in a series of operations in the last 10 days and seized different commodities including gold, red sanders, cigarettes, wildlife products. Nine people have been arrested.

On Wednesday morning, the sleuths seized 7.968 kg of gold, valued at Rs 2.61 crore, from two passengers who had arrived at Chennai Egmore station, having travelled from Kokrajhar, Assam by train. The gold was smuggled through the Indo-Myanmar border at Moreh. The passengers had concealed the gold in specially made pockets stitched into their jeans.

In another unusual case, officers of DRI intercepted a group of six passengers flying to Singapore from Chennai airport early on Tuesday morning, who were smuggling a large number of mollusc shells. On searching the check-in baggage of the passengers, a total of 352 large shells were found, weighing about 180 kg.

With the assistance of officials from the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau, the shells were identified to belong to the endangered marine species *Turbo marmoratus* of the common name "Green Turban" listed in Schedule IV of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972. The smugglers admitted to having procured these from the ecologically sensitive marine hotspots such as the Gulf of Mannar and the seas around the Andaman islands.

On May 2, DRI officials seized cigarettes of foreign origin which was prohibited for import and sale under the Customs Act and the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products were found in an import container. A huge quantity of over 30 lakh cigarettes were found concealed in the carton, with a total value of Rs 4.5 crore.

On April 29, two containers containing a total of about 14 metric tonnes of Red Sanders were seized at Chennai Port and Krishnapatnam Port. These containers were found to contain the endangered timber instead of the declared cargo of textile materials and food items. A total of Nine persons were arrested and Further investigation in these cases is in progress.