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FOREIGN NATIONALS REMANDED AFTER 'KHAT LEAF' DRUG HAUL



Khat leaves were declared psychotropic substance under the NDPS Act in February this year

By Bhavna Uchil

Two Ethiopian nationals and one Yemeni national, all in their late twenties and early thirties, were remanded to judicial custody by a magistrate yesterday till August 1 for suspected involvement in a drug syndicate dealing in Khat or Mira leaves.

Khat leaves were declared as a prohibited psychotropic substance under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act as recently as February 27 this year by a notification.

The drugs used to be imported from Ethiopia being declared as green tea and have escaped detection

earlier. They were being sent by post. On July 13 upon specific information, a parcel lying at the Airport Postal Sorting Office in the city was found to contain eight similar polythene bags containing a dry green colour leafy substance weighing a total of 32 kg.

The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI), an anti-smuggling intelligence agency, found that this consignment was to reach a hotel in Mohammad Ali Road where one of the members of the drug syndicate was put up. When DRI officials conducted a search of the hotel room, Ethiopian national Abdulaziz Usman who had come to the city from New

Delhi, was found in possession of over 4 kg of the substance.

Usman led the police to two other persons, another Ethiopian national Amir Abdurazak and Yemeni national Ahmed Mareat. According to information with the agency, the Khat leaves were supposed to be exported to the US and sold to Yemeni people in India at \$250 to \$280 per kg of the substance. The syndicate is operated by two foreign nationals based in India who operate all over the country and are instrumental in getting consignments cleared in different cities.

The DRI is making efforts to trace other persons involved in the syndicate.