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THE TIMES OF INDIA

Now, smugglers reshape gold to avoid detection

TNN | Oct 30, 2018, 12.00 AM IST



CHENNAI: Customs and Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) officials in Chennai have noticed that smugglers are not only putting in a great deal of effort in thinking of new places to hide smuggled gold, but also spending extra money in reshaping the gold to better conceal it in various metallic objects.

Smugglers are thinking up ingenious methods to avoid detection by the metal scanners at the Chennai international airport, officials said. Unfortunately for them, intelligence collection and proper scanning by officials have foiled their efforts.

For instance, on October 26, customs authorities in Chennai found that a passenger from Dubai had concealed gold, in the form of a spring, in his check-in baggage. The gold, worth nearly Rs 4.75 lakh, was of 24 karat purity and weighed 144gm.

In another incident on the same day, a passenger was found to have smuggled a gold rod inside a hollow metal spanner. The gold, worth Rs 3.92 lakh, was seized by customs.

The next day, a passenger from Kuala Lumpur was found to have concealed gold bars in a miniature Petronas Tower gift piece. He had concealed 1kg of gold worth Rs 33 lakh and was arrested by customs.

Sources at the city airport said officials suspect that a gang abroad is spending a considerable sum to shape the gold in the form of rods, sheets and intricate parts of gadgets, including music systems and microwave ovens, to avoid detection. “The cost of setting up such a unit is offset by the loss they would face in case one of their consignments is seized by customs. But they take this risk,” said a source in an investigative agency.