

DRI arrests Kochiite in gold smuggling case

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KOCHI: The Mumbai unit of directorate of revenue intelligence (DRI) has arrested a Kochi resident for his alleged involvement in aiding and abetting an inter-state smuggling syndicate that was illegally importing gold in the guise of brass scraps via ports in Gujarat. The accused VE Siraj, a resident of Elamakkara, runs a cosmetic shop in Ernakulam Broadway. DRI sources said the accused went into hiding after the agency busted the smuggling gang, including kingpin Nisar Aliyar of Perumbavoor, whom Siraj was aiding a year ago. DRI officials said the smuggling gang operated through various ports in Gujarat and smuggled gold worth more than Rs, 1,000 crore from the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

DRI nabbed him on Thursday from his residence after receiving a tip that he had reached Kochi. He is now being interrogated in Mumbai. DRI officials suspect that he had invested huge amounts in the illegal gold business.

“Mumbai unit arrested Aliyar, the kingpin in the case, last year. After this incident, Nisar left India and stayed in gulf countries. Recently, he returned to Kochi and DRI received a tip on his whereabouts. Officials were tracking him for a while and arrested him at his residence. After receiving the transit warrant from a court in Kochi, they took him to Mumbai. The officials are tracking his involvement in the scam,” said a source.

DRI said that Siraj was not directly involved in gold smuggling activities in Kerala, but he was connected to one Asif and Fazil from Perumbavoor, who were the main operatives of Aliyar. Though Aliyar was arrested, Asif and Fazil escaped with 90kg of gold before DRI could nab them. Siraj reportedly aided them and DRI is confirming how he might have helped them.

Investigation has revealed that the gang smuggled 4,522kg of gold worth Rs 1,473 crore from the UAE. They would melt the gold and transform them into rods and discs and later colour it to look like brass.