

IGI AIRPORT

# Afghan national caught smuggling USD worth ₹3cr inside harmonium

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**NEW DELHI:** The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) Saturday arrested an Afghan national, travelling to Dubai, at the Delhi airport and recovered US dollars worth over ₹3 crore concealed in a harmonium.

Senior DRI officials said the man, whose name could not be revealed as the investigations are ongoing, is a resident of Parwan in north Kabul, Afghanistan. He was intercepted by a team of DRI officials at the Indira Gandhi International Airport's (IGIA) Terminal 3, when he allegedly attempted to smuggle \$450,000 by hiding it inside the harmonium, which had a specially-built cavity.

"The man was intercepted following an input. It was during a search on him that we found the foreign currency hidden inside the harmonium. The man was



■ The harmonium had a specially-designed cavity, in which the Afghan man was carrying \$450,000.

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arrested and the money seized. It is being probed whether there is an organised syndicate responsible for the smuggling," an officer requesting anonymity said.

The DRI had, on November 1, seized foreign currency worth ₹2 crore at IGIA.

Earlier this year, an Afghan

national was arrested by customs at the Kochi airport for trying to smuggle out foreign currency worth nearly ₹11 crore.

The officer said Indian customs had made 167 seizures of foreign currency till July this fiscal year, totalling nearly ₹54 crore, and leading to 73 arrests.

The value of seizures till July is more than double compared to the corresponding period in previous fiscals, where currency equivalent to ₹25 crore was seized in 120 cases leading to 36 arrests, the officer said. During the fiscal year 2017-18, ₹89.7 crore worth foreign currency was seized, whereas ₹73 crore was seized in 2016-17.

"Even internationally, the movement of foreign currency in cash by couriers is used by organised crime syndicates to park illicit funds abroad. The outward smuggling of cash is a technique adopted as an alternate to hawala (informal banking), since it saves 3-5% deducted as hawala margin in a hawala transaction. Trend analyses by DRI indicates that Indian airports are being targeted by international crime syndicates for gold and narcotic drugs smuggling and the consequent smuggling of foreign currency," the official added.