

Four held for evading 200% duty for importing Pakistani dates

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MUMBAI: Four persons who imported 25 containers of dry dates worth about Rs. 5 crore from Pakistan but routed it through Oman to mislead customs have been arrested by the Directorate Revenue of Intelligence (DRI).

After the attack on a CRPF bus at Pulwama in J&K killed 40 this February, India had hiked duty on all imports from Pakistan to 200%. Prima facie, the duty evasion is estimated to be around Rs. 9 crore.

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| 2 ARE RECENT INDIAN CITIZENS | | |
| The Duty Dateline  | FEB 14 Terrorist rams car bomb into CRPF bus at Pulwama in J&K, kills 40 FEB 15 India revokes Most Favoured Nation status given to Pak in 1996 | FEB 16 India increases customs duty on all goods imported from Pak to 200% to discourage all trade. MFN applied rates are 32.8% and 10.7%, respectively, for farm and non-farm products |
| The Racket 1 Indian importers bring in 25 containers of Pakistan dry dates. Route it through Oman to JNPT in a bid to escape 200% duty 2 DRI is investigating multiple containers in Chennai and Gujarat for the same racket |  | Four arrested, including two Pakistan-born men who recently became Indian citizens |
| DUTY EVASION IS ESTIMATED TO BE ₹9cr | | |

Besides seizing these 40-tonne containers from JNPT, the DRI has detained a few more in Chennai and Gujarat and is investigating them.

Interestingly, two of the four persons arrested — Mohandas Wadhmal Kataria and Shewak Makhija — were born in Pakistan and recently procured Indian citizenship. The others held are Imran Ebrahim Telli and Irfan Hajisoman Nursumar.

The DRI recently received a tip-off that K.B.N Tradelinks was importing dry dates from Pakistan by routing them through Oman. “In order to evade the steep customs duty of 200% on all goods originating from Pakistan, Imran Telli, proprietor of K.B.N Tradelinks, in connivance with some Pakistanis based in Oman was importing the dates,” said an official. A few Pakistanis and the Pakistani firm, Anwar Al Sharqia Al Haditha LLC in Oman, have been identified as involved in the racket.

During questioning, Telli admitted that he was in the business of importing wet dates before the imposition of the 200% duty. After that, his imports had almost come to a stop. At this point, he met Makhija in Vashi, Navi Mumbai, through a common friend. Makhija suggested that he shift to importing dry dates.

Nursumar, who is Telli’s brother-in-law, lives at Claire Road in Byculla and his family is into the dates business. It was Nursumar’s connections in Pakistan who helped them route the dry dates from Pakistan to Oman and then to India. In fact, Nursumar’s the import-export code (IEC) used to import the dry dates.

“There is ample evidence that Nursumar was in constant touch with dates traders in Pakistan even after imposition of the 200% customs duty. All these accused knew very well that the dates that they were importing were from Pakistan and yet they willfully declared the country of origin as Oman and have caused a huge duty evasion to the tune to Rs 8.5 crore,” said an official.