

DRI seizes 834 tortoises meant for smuggling to Bangladesh

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The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) has seized 834 Indian star tortoises meant for smuggling to Bangladesh, an official statement issued on Friday said.

On the basis of inputs that a consignment of Indian star tortoises is being brought from Chennai onboard the Coromandel express train and would be handed over to a group of people at the Santragachi railway station here, officials of the DRI mounted surveillance at the station on Monday.

At around noon, a few minutes after the Coromandel express arrived at the station, the officials spotted some suspicious movement of three people trying to hurriedly load four trolley bags in a car at the parking area, the DRI said in the statement.

The officials intercepted the vehicle along with the three persons.

During interrogation, the persons admitted that the trolley bags contained Indian star tortoises and were handed over to them by a passenger of that train. The trio was supposed to carry the bags to Banipur from where they would be smuggled out to Bangladesh, the statement added.

On a thorough search, the officials found 834 number of Indian star tortoises, a vulnerable wildlife species and prohibited for export under the Indian Foreign Trade Policy.

The tortoises, which were seized, handed over to Alipore Zoological Garden, Kolkata for safe custody.

The three people were arrested under provisions of the Customs Act.

In another case, the DRI has seized six kilograms of gold, smuggled into India from Myanmar, worth Rs 2.01 crore from four people staying in a hotel here.

Information was received that four people, jointly travelling in a group, were lodged in Hotel Samrat here and they would receive gold of foreign origin, which was smuggled into India from Myanmar through the Indo-Myanmar border for ultimate delivery to Uttar Pradesh, the DRI said.

A team raided the hotel and identified the rooms where the suspected persons had checked in, it said.

The four people admitted that they had in their possession substantial quantity of gold of foreign origin in bar form, secreted in their shoes.

They said such gold bars were smuggled into India from Myanmar and they had come here to procure those smuggled gold bars and take them to Pratapgarh for further delivery.

A total of six rectangular shaped gold bars of foreign origin totally weighing six kgs were seized from the possession of these four people, the DRI said.

All the four people were arrested and produced before a court here on Thursday, which sent them to judicial custody till June 27.