

# Umrah gold smuggling racket runs deep: DRI

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**HYDERABAD:** The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence Hyderabad unit, after cracking a gold smuggling racket which used poor Umrah pilgrims as carriers, are now focusing on the receivers. The 14 persons arrested on Wednesday were found to be carriers who were forced into the racket, but the details of the kingpin operating from Gulf countries and the receivers in Hyderabad are now being probed into.

Though there have been instances of people returning home and being lured into gold smuggling on the promise of a commission, for the first time has the instance of pilgrims lured into this racket ia exposed by DRI. This gives rise to suspicion that the gangs operating from Gulf could have trapped more Umrah aspirants, who are in need of financial assistance. Officials suspect that the agents have identified such persons from different parts of the old city and roped them.

The arrested carriers, were offered a free Umrah trip and while returning, they were blackmailed to carry gold along with them. With this racket busted, there is now speculation that many such carriers could have already landed in the city and the gold has reached its destination, say officials.

Now, the major task ahead for the DRI officials is to trace the receivers and crack the chain. But since the carriers do not have any details on receivers, it is a tough challenge for them to solve the case. Even if the carriers had details of the receivers, they would have relocated immediately. On Wednesday, DRI busted a gold smuggling racket and seized 6.46 kg gold, worth `2.17 crore and arrested 14 persons who were returning to Hyderabad after completing their Umrah.