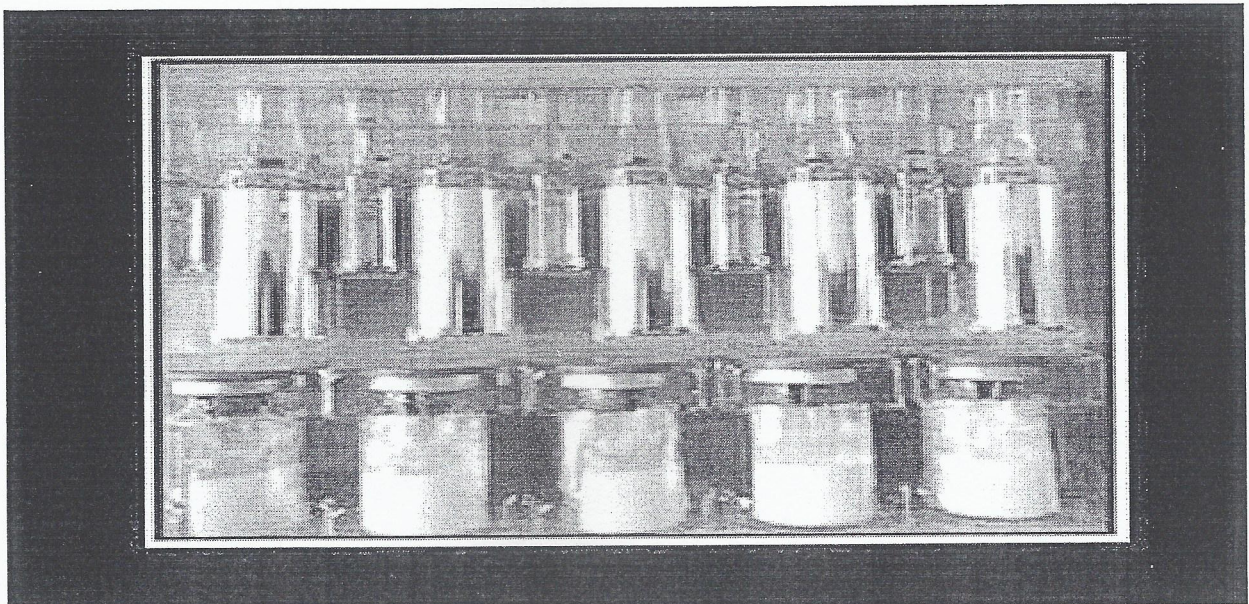


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Rs 13.5 lakh worth of illegally imported skin-whitening drugs recovered

Petlee Peter | TNN | May 17, 2018, 07:29 IST



Sleuths suspect that the drug is unethically used for skin bleaching in cosmetology clinics

BENGALURU: The directorate of revenue intelligence (DRI) has seized illegally imported skin-whitening powder worth over Rs 13.5 lakh. This has helped the agency unearth a huge racket involved in smuggling the cosmetology drugs into Bengaluru for use and distribution across all southern states.

Sleuths suspect that the drug is used for skin bleaching through unethical medical practices in cosmetology clinics and beauty parlours in Bengaluru and other southern cities owing to the huge demand for fairer skin.

Sources with DRI's Bengaluru zonal unit believe the city has increasingly become the receiving and distribution point for skinwhitening drugs shipped

from Thailand and Malaysia due to rising demand for skin treatments. "In the second week of May, we received a tip-off that a large consignment of skin-whitening medicines was being dropped off at a house in Jaynagar," said an investigating officer.

DRI sleuths weren't disappointed on the afternoon of May 8 when a man arrived at the location to receive 100 cartons that were sent from Bangkok to Bengaluru after being falsely declared as food supplements. "We caught the man and an inspection of the cartons revealed numerous bottles of Japan-made Tatio Active DX Powder. It was known that the powder was meant to be administered into the body through intravenous injections, popularly known as drip," the officer added. Another man was also detained in connection with the incident.

The suspects, who are from Bhatkal, had come to Bengaluru to pick up the consignment. Special food supplements are often not opened and inspected in India due to expiry deadlines for food items. Legal importing of the skin-whitening drug requires the approval of the drugs control department.

Further probe revealed that the suspects had similarly imported over 1,000 such boxes of the medicine valued at more than Rs 1.35 crore on earlier occasions.

"We suspect more gangs could be involved in this illegal drug trade. They use Bengaluru as a receiving point and send the drugs to Chennai, Kochi and Hyderabad. We suspect the drug is illegally given to clients through some clinics and beauty parlours," another DRI official added.

According to city-based dermatologist and former head of St John's Medical College, Anil Abraham, there is a huge demand for skin-whitening treatments and many cosmetology centres offer them. "Doctors don't encourage such treatments as they involve toning down the melanin pigment in the skin through medicines to give it a glow. It is extremely risky for unqualified people to perform the procedure as it could lead to the patient's death," Dr Abraham added.