

DRI seeks global help to track Pakistani supplier

By [Abhishek Sharan](#), Mumbai Mirror | Jul 12, 2019, 06.00 AM IST



Kingpin and jeweller behind 185 kg gold smuggling to remain in custody till SC decides the case.

The Supreme Court on Thursday stayed, pending its judgment in the case, a Bombay High Court order quashing detention orders passed under the stringent COFEPOSA (Conservation of Foreign Exchange and Prevention of Smuggling Activities Act) against two alleged members, including the suspected kingpin, of an interstate smuggling syndicate that was busted in March-April this year.

The apex court's stay has come after the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) opposed the release of the accused on Thursday, pointing out that the syndicate was allegedly procuring gold from a "Pakistani national" based in Dubai and that the chances of "a wider conspiracy to destabilise the Indian economy cannot be ruled out". The DRI has sought help from "international investigating agencies" to track down the Pakistani suspect, said a DRI source.

On June 25, the HC had set aside the detentions of main accused Nisar Aliyar and jeweller Happy Dhakad on technical grounds, stating that the 'relied-upon documents' were not served along with May 17 detention orders. Against HC's June 25 order, the DRI then filed a Special Leave Petition. On July 3, the apex court had asked all the parties to submit their written submissions by July 8.

"After we laid out the 'gravity' of the charges against the syndicate and its members on Thursday, the SC stayed the HC's quashing order. We submitted to the court that the syndicate is behind the smuggling of 3,396 kg of gold worth around Rs 1,000 crore from July 2018 to March 2019," a senior DRI source said.

In March-April 2019 alone, DRI's Mumbai zonal unit seized 185 kg of gold brought allegedly from Dubai in a camouflaged as metal scrap via sea to evade payment of customs duties. It was brought to Jamnagar in Gujarat and then transported to Mumbai for sale to jewellers. The DRI has so far arrested 14 men in the case, including the two accused whose release is being opposed. Also part of the original smuggled consignment was 90 kg of gold which is yet to be tracked.

On Thursday, an advisory board comprising three members – including a HC Justice – began its proceedings to review the detentions of all the arrested accused under COFEPOSA. As per law, the advisory board reviews such detentions within 90 days of the order and it can either "drop" the detentions or recommend extension for another six months, said sources.