

Bengaluru: Grocer, brain behind gold smuggling racket

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Gold worth Rs 4 crore seized from travellers coming from Gulf.



DRI officers rushed to the airport, intercepted six passengers and seized 22 kg gold in compound/mixed/paste form, strapped on their person. (Representational Image)

Bengaluru: The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI), Bengaluru zone recently arrested a grocery store owner, who is the "key co-ordinator" between the investors and hawala operators based in Dubai and the carriers of contraband gold in the city and foiled an attempt to smuggle gold worth crores of rupees.

"The seized contraband gold was to be delivered to someone in Kerala," said an officer.

On October 13 the DRI officials were tipped off about a major consignment of gold that was being flown in from Dubai, Sharjah and Bahrain by some carriers, who were scheduled to arrive at the Kempegowda International Airport early October 14.

Following the tip off, the Revenue Intelligence sleuths last weekend intercepted the owner of a grocery shop in the city, who turned out to be a key link in the international smuggling syndicate and recovered the details of the six passengers, who were scheduled to land at the KIA between 3am and 4am on October 14 from Dubai, Sharjah and Bahrain.

DRI officers rushed to the airport, intercepted six passengers and seized 22 kg gold in compound/ mixed/paste form, strapped on their person.

"Out of the six men, four are from Kerala, one from Bengaluru and the sixth one is from Mumbai. During interrogation the passengers admitted that some unknown people had handed over the packets of contraband gold in paste form to them at Dubai/ Sharjah/Bahrain airports and asked them to deliver it to some unknown persons, who would receive them at the KIA. The carriers were paid some amount of money as carrier charges," the officer added.

After intercepting the six men at the airport, the DRI officers then laid a trap to secure the men, who were supposed to receive them outside the KIA and collect the smuggled gold.

"The officers apprehended three people who had come to receive the passengers. During interrogation the passengers and receivers provided details of other gang members, who were waiting to board a bus at a bus terminus on the city outskirts. We intercepted two of them. On inquiry, both admitted that they were agents of the gold smuggling gang and their job was to collect the contraband impure gold in paste form. On seeing the officers a third man, who was part of the network fled the spot. He was however, overpowered and arrested after a hot chase. He later reportedly told the DRI officers that they were part of the smugglers' network and were paid commission for every delivery of a contraband consignment," the officer added.

The impure gold in compound/mixed/paste form, which was recovered from the passengers, was sent for refining and a net quantity of 11.29 kg of gold, valued at approximately Rs 3.67 crore, was recovered and seized by the DRI.

"Gold smugglers handpick carrier passengers including women and lure them with hefty commissions. The DRI has arrested 14 men under the Customs Act and has seized around Rs 8 lakh in cash, which was found in their possession," the officer said.