

Chennai: DRI seizes methaqualone bound for Australia

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CHENNAI: Directorate of Revenue Intelligence on Monday night seized 12.98 kg of methaqualone worth 6.5 crore on the street from a courier office in Chennai. In an official release on Tuesday, DRI's Chennai zonal unit said the narcotic was about to be smuggled to Australia in a consignment of gym bikes. When the packages of ready-to-assemble bikes were opened, the metal rods were found to be unusually heavy. They were cut open and found to contain white powder suspected to be methaqualone, said a DRI source.

According to the website drugbank.ca, methaqualone is a sedative-hypnotic drug that is similar in effect to central nervous system depressants. Officials say that it is now being popularly used as a stimulant drug on the party circuit. According to literature, the drug takes half an hour to bring in a hallucinatory effect which can last up to eight hours.

In the past, attempts had been made to smuggle the narcotic disguised as palm sugar from Bengaluru airport to south-east Asian countries, where it is popular on the party circuit. Incidentally, that consignment was booked by Chennai-based exporters through an air courier.