

Four held for smuggling foreign cigarettes

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Contraband worth ₹4.23 crore seized



DRI seized about 30 lakh cigarettes in a consignment from Dubai.

The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI), Chennai Zonal Unit, arrested four persons after intercepting a three-container consignment from Dubai that contained foreign cigarettes worth ₹4.23 crore on Saturday.

The DRI officers seized the contraband based on specific intelligence that cigarettes were being smuggled by a syndicate in an import consignment of calcium carbonate.

The consignment was being imported in three 20-foot containers and landed at Kattupalli Port and was trans-shipped to a container freight station. On examination, the DRI officials found

cartons concealed inside the calcium carbonate bags which contained Gudang Garam cigarettes from Indonesia. About 30.24 lakh cigarette sticks were found.

The market value of the seized cigarettes has been estimated to be about ₹4.23 crore and they did not bear statutory health and pictorial warnings mandated under the Cigarettes and other Tobacco Products (Packaging and Labelling) Rules, 2008, as amended effective from September 2018.

The consignment including cigarettes, calcium carbonate bags and the three containers were seized under provisions of the Customs Act, 1962 and the importer who permitted the syndicate to operate through his firm were arrested alongside three others, the officials said.

Cigarettes fall under Section 123 of the Customs Act, 1962 by which burden is cast upon those in possession to prove that they were not smuggled into India. In January 2018, about 70.56 lakh sticks of the same brand of cigarettes were seized at the Chennai Port by the Special Intelligence & Investigation Branch (SIIB) of the Chennai Sea Port Customs Commissionerate.

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