

Crime Branch busts cigarette, tobacco smuggling racket

Gautam S. Mengle | Mumbai , May 09, 2020

Material brought illegally in vehicles that had permission to carry fruits and vegetables

Where there is prohibition, black marketing rackets are inevitable. The Mumbai Police Crime Branch has busted a racket where tobacco, cigarettes and paan masala were being smuggled in vehicles that had government permission to transport fruits and vegetables.

According to Crime Branch officials, the lid was blown off the racket after police inspector Sunil Mane, in charge of Unit X, received a tip-off. A Unit X team visited Gajanan Colony in Shivaji Nagar, Govandi on Thursday and searched the area covertly till they located the Tata S Model tempo the informant had specified.

“The tempo had a sticker issued by the government, which permitted it to ply during the lockdown. The sticker said it had permission to transport fruits and vegetables. We spotted two men near the tempo who tried to sneak out as soon as the saw us inspecting it,” a Unit X officer said.

Gaus Ahmed Khan (38) and Shehzad Kutchi (31), were intercepted and asked to open the tempo, after which the police found packets of tobacco-mixed scented supari, pan masala, chewing tobacco and cigarettes, collectively worth ₹21.48 lakh, stored inside.

The material was seized in the presence of Food and Drug Administration officers and the two were arrested.

“Based on their interrogation, we arrested a third accused, S.N. Khan (27), from Shivaji Nagar on Friday. We also raided a godown specified by the them and seized 14 bundles of gutkha worth ₹28 lakh. The accused and the seized goods have been handed over to the Shivaji Nagar police for investigation,” the officer said.

Preliminary inquiries indicate that more people are involved in the racket, which includes picking up the material from the manufacturers and smuggling it to various parts of the city, where it is being sold at higher rates. The racket operates on word-of-mouth publicity and is suspected to be active for at least the past one month, sources said.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/crime-branch-busts-cigarette-tobacco-smuggling-racket/article31539262.ece>