

## DRI seizes cigarettes worth ₹12 crore smuggled from Dubai

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The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI), Mumbai zone officials have seized foreign brand cigarettes worth around ₹12 crore while they were being smuggled into the country from Dubai. The seized cigarettes were concealed in the container full of cartons of dates (Khajur). Two members involved in the racket have been arrested for creating dummy companies to facilitate the smuggling.

DRI officials said that since there was a huge demand for cigarettes because of its unavailability due to lockdown of over 75 days, the syndicate was trying to smuggle a huge consignment to make a huge profit. The official claimed that the seized consignment of smuggled foreign brand cigarettes is one of the biggest in recent times.

According to the DRI officials, they had received a tip-off about a large number of cigarettes of various foreign brands being smuggled into India through an import consignment that arrived at Navkar Corporation Ltd, a container freight station at Nhava Sheva. Based on this specific intelligence DRI team carried out a raid on June 10.

The officials recovered 32,640 cartons containing 71,61,600 cigarettes sticks of foreign origin of various brands worth over ₹11 crore. The same was seized under the provisions of the Customs Act, 1962.

The subsequent investigation led to the arrest of Manish Sharma, 31, and Sunil Laxman Waghmare, 29, on Friday.

“Both are Chembur residents and were instrumental in creating dummy companies which would be used in smuggled activities. The two were looking after all the paperwork for the syndicate. They collected documents such as electricity bill, copy of PAN card, Aadhar card and photographs of different persons. They provided these documents to the members of the smuggling syndicate, for the opening of fake companies and to obtain GST number and import and export code (IEC),” said a senior DRI official.

The accused persons had also allegedly arranged the fake documents used in the import of the container having smuggled cigarettes in the present case. Documents arranged by them were used for the creation of dummy companies several times in the past and they had been doing this for monetary considerations. They would also be charged with sections of forgery in future, DRI officer said.

Another senior DRI officer said we need to investigate the role of other key persons based in other cities in the country, involved with them, which appear to be operating at the international level.

However, advocate Ravi Hirani representing the two arrested accused said that the two are innocent and they have just submitted documents for clearance. “They had no knowledge about the smuggling of cigarettes. They have been made a scapegoat by the central law enforcement agency,” claims Hirani.

A local court on Friday sent the two accused to judicial custody till June 25.

**Source:** <https://www.hindustantimes.com/mumbai-news/dri-seizes-cigarettes-worth-12-crore-smuggled-from-dubai/story-797jzdR3sxYgwCocNmcQul.html>