

11 stranded Indians lured with free tickets to smuggle cigarettes into India from Dubai

Eleven migrant workers from India, stranded in Dubai due to the coronavirus lockdown, were offered free tickets back to the country by smugglers in exchange of illegally carrying a consignment of cigarettes worth Rs 50 lakh with them,

Munish Pandey | New Delhi | July 23, 2020

Cigarette smugglers are using the Covid-19 pandemic and the desperation of stranded Indians to return home to illegally push international cigarettes into the Indian market.

Eleven migrant workers from India, stranded in Dubai due to the coronavirus lockdown, were offered free tickets back to the country by smugglers in exchange of illegally carrying a consignment of cigarettes worth Rs 50 lakh with them, Customs officials told India Today TV.



Acting on a tip-off, the 11 migrant workers were intercepted by officials when they landed at Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport on Wednesday.

"Passengers, mostly from Punjab, are migrant labourers and were lured by offering tickets to India as they were stuck due to the pandemic. They arrived by two Emirates flights and the seizure value is likely to increase since the operation is still underway," Customs officials in Delhi said.

The Delhi Customs (Preventive) has launched an investigation to identify people who used the migrant workers in this criminal activity.

In another such seizure, the Delhi Customs on Tuesday intercepted a consignment of foreign-origin cigarettes worth Rs 12 lakh outside Delhi International Airport. "Preliminary investigation suggests that goods had been flown-in using evacuation flight from Dubai," an officer said.

The Delhi Customs have also caught two people who took the consignment from the passengers. "Their task was to load the goods into a designated vehicle for further delivery," a Customs officer said.

Smuggling of drugs and cigarettes has increased multiple folds since the lockdown and ban on air travel. Customs officials across India have seized dozen such consignments in the last few weeks.

Source: <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/11-stranded-indians-lured-with-free-tickets-to-smuggle-cigarettes-into-india-from-dubai-1703739-2020-07-23>