

## Officials suspect cigarette smuggling from B'desh

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Representative image

Customs officials investigating the smuggling of contraband cigarettes suspect the role of a gang involved in smuggling goods across the Bangladesh border selling it in various Indian cities

Currently, the officials are questioning two persons in Bengaluru, who were detained after the officials busted the racket. Officials are on the lookout for the kingpin, who is at large.

According to a source in the Customs Department, though the racket was operational in Bengaluru for more than six months, the department was tracking sellers of these cigarettes to find the source of origin.

"Once we learnt these contraband products were being brought from Kolkata after being smuggled to the country from Bangladesh, we dispatched personnel to scrutinise the goods being brought in trains to the city," a senior official told DH.

During the inspection of goods on trains from West Bengal, officials found that some items were being dispatched to suspicious addresses. "One of the addresses to which goods were sent to was NBK, 17th Cross, Yeshwantpur, which was a false address. Usually, goods dispatched are provided to people after they furnish Know Your Customer (KYC) details. However, the dispatch we suspected did not have a valid KYC," the official said.

Similar dispatches — claiming to be cotton clothes — were intercepted at both Yeshwantpur and Krantivira Sangolli Rayanna (KSR) railway stations. There were no takers for the cigarettes on the day when they were seized as the smugglers suspected the presence of customs officials. Meanwhile, railway staff at KSR railway station tipped off the officials about an individual who used to collect these goods.

He was subsequently nabbed and questioned, following which he directed them towards the three godowns at Chickpet. A day later, officials searched these facilities and seized Rs two crore worth cigarettes.

According to releases issued by M Ramana Reddy, Additional Commissioner of Customs, contraband cigarettes worth Rs 3.5 cr was seized on two separate occasions during an operation which lasted a month.

A source added that they suspected the role of lower rung railways staff in West Bengal. Officials are continuing the probe to nab the persons involved.

**Source:** <https://www.deccanherald.com/city/bengaluru-crime/officials-suspect-cigarette-smuggling-from-b-desh-744977.html>