

Covid-19 special trains being used to transport smuggled cigarettes: Customs

Bhavatosh Singh | July 11, 2020

In two days, custom department has seized over 23 lakh cigarette sticks whose market value is over Rs 1.6 crores. All seizures made at Old Delhi Railway Station.



On Friday customs seized 29 lakh cigarette sticks

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- High demand for smuggled foreign cigarettes because of extended lockdown and cheap prices
- Foreign brands are smuggled from South Korea, Bangladesh and Myanmar
- Illegally sold cigarettes sold accounts of 1/4th of domestic consumption

New Delhi: Customs department has found that Covid-19 special trains are being used by organised crime syndicates to transport smuggled foreign brand cigarettes across the country.

Two big seizures have been made by the Delhi customs (preventive) commissionerate this week which led to seizure of 23.5 lakh of illegally imported cigarettes whose market value is approximately Rs 1.6 crores.

In a recent report published by the Tobacco Institute of India, illegally sold cigarettes sold accounts of 1/4th of domestic consumption. India is the fourth biggest market of smuggled cigarettes in the world. It is estimated that government losses approximately Rs 13,000 crores every year due to illegal cigarette trade.

On 8th July, a raid was carried out by the customs department at Old Delhi railway station and seized 4.5 lakh sticks of Paris brand of cigarette worth Rs 40 lakh. The cigarette sticks were smuggled from Bangladesh and Myanmar and were being clandestinely brought to Delhi from Varanasi in a Covid-19 special train.

Two days later, the customs department again seized 10 lakh cigarettes sticks of hugely popular Korean brand Special Gold Esse and Super Slim Esse Light. The cigarette packets were concealed in 100 packets and was being transported again in a train which was running between Varanasi and Delhi. The market value is over Rs 1.2 crores. A packet of Esse Light sold surreptitiously in Delhi costs Rs 150.

While carrying out searches in the train, officials from the custom department also found 9 lakh cigarettes of a foreign brand worth Rs 36 lakhs which were kept in 38 gunny bags. Customs have detained a man who is suspected to be part of a gang that was smuggling foreign brands.

"In two operations, customs have seized cigarettes of foreign origin and there is a violation of provisions of COTPA Act (2003) and Legal Metrology Act 2009," said the customs department in a press statement.

Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act specifies all manufacturers to prominently display the health warning and Legal Metrology Act makes it mandatory to mention on the packets - date of manufacture, address of manufacturer and quantity. Violation of these provisions is a punishable offence leading to imprisonment and a monetary fine.

Source: <https://www.timesnownews.com/india/article/covid-19-special-trains-being-used-to-transport-smuggled-cigarettes-customs/619891>