

Press Release

28th India- Sri Lanka Director-General Level Talks, 2018

on Anti-Smuggling and Related Matters

22-23 February, 2018 , New Delhi, India

Shri Debi Prasad Dash, Director General, DRI India and Mrs. P.S.M. Charles, Director General, Sri Lanka Customs held the 28th DG level Talks on Anti-Smuggling and Related Matters in New Delhi on 22nd and 23rd February 2018. They resolved to strengthen co-operation in preventing the smuggling of gold, drugs, Fake Indian Currency Notes (FICN), wildlife, and other contraband across the India-Sri Lanka route, and to address trade-related issues such as 'Country of Origin' frauds that impact the revenue of both nations.

2. The two-day meeting, which was held after ten years, focused on many areas of mutual interest to combat smuggling and improve trade facilitation by use of data analytics, new investigation techniques, inter-agency co-ordination, and capacity building. The Director General, DRI India and Director-General, Customs, Sri Lanka discussed the modalities of Joint Co-ordination Committee for investigative assistance under the Customs Mutual Administrative Assistance Agreement (CMAA), which was entered into between the two countries in 2015. They also discussed various issues relating to trade facilitation, automation, enforcement and Joint Working Group on data sharing.

3. In 2016-17, DRI had effected seizures of gold in 7 cases, totally weighing 54 kilograms, valued at about Rs. 16 crore, smuggled from Sri Lanka into India through the sea route using country boats and cleared after

landing on the coastal areas of Tamil Nadu. In 2017-18, 80 kilograms of gold smuggled in a similar manner, valued at about Rs. 24 crore, has so far been seized by DRI in 8 cases.

4. Recently, in the early hours of 21st February, DRI seized 130 pieces of gold with foreign markings, totally weighing 19.2 kilograms, valued at Rs. 6.1 crores, at Mimisal, a small coastal village in Tamil Nadu, which was smuggled from Sri Lanka through the sea using a country boat.

5. The coastal route is also used by drug traffickers – in January 2017, after extensive surveillance, Indian Customs officers seized 6 kilograms of Heroin from a boat near Tuticorin. After apprehending three Indians who were attempting to smuggle the Heroin by sea, the officers ventured into the sea in disguise and nabbed the Sri Lankan buyers in mid-sea in a risky operation.

6. Apart from gold and narcotics, wildlife such as exotic Turtles of Central and North-East Indian origin and various marine species, are also being smuggled between the two countries by sea. Smuggling of foreign currency is also a shared concern, and both countries have seized large quantities of foreign currency in recent times.

7. It was agreed to hold regular meetings to exchange information to effectively combat smuggling between the two countries.