

Revenue intelligence agency DRI has served an arrest warrant via email to absconding diamantaire Nirav Modi in a case of alleged customs duty evasion, officials said today.

The warrant was issued by a court in Surat in Gujarat after he failed to appear before it in connection with the case, they said.

The DRI had in March launched prosecution against Nirav Modi and three of his firms Firestar International Pvt Ltd (FIPL), Firestar Diamond International Pvt Ltd (FDIPL) and Radashir Jewellery Co Pvt Ltd (RJCPL), based in the Special Economic Zone, Surat, for allegedly diverting duty-free imported goods for purposes other than specified in the rules, they said.

According to the norms, duty-free import of goods by the units located in the SEZ is permitted only if they are to be used as raw material and are exported after value addition or processing.

It was found that high-value diamonds and pearls worth Rs 890 crore, involving customs duty of Rs 52 crore, were allegedly diverted by the SEZ units controlled by Nirav Modi and sold in the open market, the officials said.

To evade import duty, he exported low-quality diamonds and pearls and claimed that these were the ones imported and then processed, they said.

The DRI, which is probing the case, has claimed that it has collected vital details, documents and evidence.

After the launch of prosecution in the case, summonses were issued by the court of chief judicial magistrate, Surat, against Nirav Modi but neither he nor his representative appeared before the court on specified dates, they said.

Thereafter, the arrest warrant was issued against Nirav Modi by the court and it was emailed by the DRI to him, they said.

Nirav Modi and his uncle Mehul Choksi, the promoter of Gitanjali Gems, have allegedly defrauded Punjab National Bank of over Rs 13,000 crore.

The Central Bureau of Investigation and the Enforcement Directorate have also registered cases of alleged fraud against them.

Meanwhile, a report said that Nirav Modi was living in a flat just above his jewellery store in the post Mayfair area of London while he was being hunted in India for an alleged money laundering case linked to over \$2 bn. The 47-year-old diamantaire was able to travel in and out of Britain at least four times since his passport was cancelled by the Indian authorities in February.

During his stay in London, he was reportedly living in the heart of the city above his jewellery boutique called "Nirav Modi" on Old Bond Street, which was reportedly closed last week, The Sunday Times reported.

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