

■ Custom audit fears force importers to shy away from gold

No takers for 250kg gold

AGE CORRESPONDENT
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Gold amounting to 250 kgs is lying at Mumbai airport as no one has come forward to take delivery, according to Kotak Commodities analyst tracking gold. This follows confusion over a customs notification that says "nominated agencies can be visited by customs officers for surprise audit or checks. The jurisdictional commissioner should devise a system of random audit at least once in three months during the first year and twice in a year subsequently."

In guidelines running into several pages and innumerable do's and don'ts the customs has instructed importers to produce about 40 documents, said Dharmesh Bhatia, deputy vice-presi-

GOLD HUNT

Since 2 days no one came to take delivery of 250kg gold lying at Mumbai Airport.



Confusions galore

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—DHARMESH BHATIA

dent, research, Kotak Commodities Service Ltd. "Bankers of the importers have advised them that it would be in their interest not to take the delivery until everything becomes clear," he said. Till Thursday no one came to take delivery of about 250 kilos gold lying at Mumbai Airport, said Mr Bhatia.

Mukesh Kothari, the director of Riddhi-Siddhi Bullion said they are examining the customs notification before putting fresh orders. "We don't want to take any risk now in which both our gold and money are blocked like the imported consignment which has been stuck since the last one and a

half months," he said.

Kolkata-based Pankaj Parekh, vice-president of Gem & Jewellery Export Promotion Council, said "we are required to give a bond stating that we have fulfilled all the conditions and paid duty. Customs officials are provided with broad powers to conduct raids in the guise of 'surprise audit' to ensure it. We are required to show the inward remittance certificate of goods exported. It means that this would be considered as a proof of export. The process for getting such certificate is complex and takes nine months."

He said the irony is that the SEZ from where only 30 tonnes of jewellery are exported annually aren't included in the import regulations, but exports outside this zone account for 80 tonnes.