

Software CEO arrested for US drug cartel link

The director of an IT company in West Bengal, arrested for alleged involvement with a US firm linked to a drug cartel, was an alumnus of the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT)-Delhi who did his post-graduation from North Carolina University.

Sanjay Kedia, head of software development firm and BPO Xponse Technologies Limited in the city's info-tech hub Sector V, was arrested Monday in the wake of an earlier raid on his office premises.

Kedia's arrest followed a tip-off by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) of the US to India's Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB).

NCB officers had raided Kedia's office on the seventh and eighth floors of Kariwala Towers on Feb 1. After a scrutiny of the seizure, which included Rs.2 million in cash and \$300, the sleuths arrested him from his home in Salt Lake's EE block.

Kedia, 33, was produced in a city court Monday and remanded to judicial custody for a fortnight.

'Officials of the Drug Enforcement Administration in the US tipped us off,' an NCB official said.

Kedia has been charged under sections 24, 29 and 30 of the Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act.

Section 24 deals with those who trade in or deal with banned substances outside the country without a proper licence. Section 29 covers abetment and conspiracy, while section 30 deals with those who prepare such substances for commercial purpose without licence.

Kedia's lawyer C.K. Jain said his client has 'in essence' been charged with providing software to a company that ran its business through a website dealing with pharmaceuticals.

'The company had asked my client to develop a software for the website that deals with medicines and drugs and also look after its maintenance. Accordingly, he had prepared the software.

'For every transaction carried out through the website, my client received a part of the service charge. The US agency now alleges that he has been receiving a part of the money that a drug cartel made by selling drugs over the website,' Jain said.

Founded in 2002 by Kedia, Xponse's 'apparent' objective is to provide holistic technological solutions to businesses that intend to compete in the omni-changing global marketplace.

Kedia, who has a degree from IIT-Delhi, pursued a master's degree in North Carolina University in the US. He gathered the requisite managerial and technical skills to launch a company by working in the US with IT juggernauts such as Microsoft, eGain, Charles Schwab, AT and T and JP Morgan, the company website says.

The company has expanded by more than 400 percent in less than three years of its operations and has a workforce of 350.

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