

# Sri Lankan gem dealer faces huge loss after HK\$6m robbery in Hong Kong

Those attending Wan Chai fair next week urged to speak up if they come across his stolen stones

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An international gem trader, facing financial ruin after precious stones worth HK\$6 million he was carrying were snatched in a city shopping mall, has called on fellow traders taking part in a jewel fair next week to be on the lookout for them.

The plea by Sri Lankan businessman Mohamed Azan Mohideen Abdul Cader comes as a police hunt for the suspects, who made off with 750 of his uninsured gems in the iSquare mall in Tsim Sha Tsui on Sunday, continues.

The 44-year-old trader has pleaded for the safe return of the precious stones and urged local and international traders to watch out for anyone trying to sell the stolen goods.

Abdul Cader called for extra vigilance from those attending the 29th Hong Kong Jewellery and Gem Fair at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre in Wan Chai next week.

“Don’t buy stolen things at the fair, so please check if these stones come on to the market. Everyone needs to be careful, there have been lots of instances in the past when thieves are either in the fair or outside,” Abdul Cader said.

Last year’s fair made headlines when jewels worth HK\$6.9 million were stolen in a string of thefts, typical of a problem that has plagued the event in recent years.

Abdul Cader said his loss “will cripple our business completely. We have lost almost everything.”

Some 750 stones were stolen, among them several high-value items, including an 8.05 carat ruby worth US\$200,000, a 32.91 carat padparadscha pink sapphire stone valued at US\$60,000 and a 14.36 carat purple pink sapphire worth the same amount.

Detectives are looking for two men in connection with the theft.

One is aged between 40 and 50 and is 1.7m in height and of fat build. Another is about 30-40 years old, 1.8m tall and of slim build.

After arriving in Hong Kong on Sunday morning from a gem trade show in Las Vegas, Abdul Cader had expected to hand the gems over to an associate before flying to Sri Lanka the same day.

He believes he was followed into the mall. Officers are exploring whether the crime was gang-related and a professional attempt at stealing the contents of the bag.

The costliest rubies and sapphires were on loan from suppliers Abdul Cader met at a jewellery fair in Las Vegas, with the rest paid out of his own pocket.

Traditionally, gems are loaned to dealers, who then try to sell them before paying the supplier. Without insurance, Abdul Cader faces the prospect of a huge financial losses.

“I don’t have a big company. I invest in stones. My inventory is my business,” he said. “Insurance can be really costly as well. On a day-to-day basis it can be a costly expense.”

He added: “I am really upset that I’ve lost such a big amount of my stock. I’m still hopeful the police will be able to identify and locate the bag. But the thing is I am growing weary of it and it has already been four days.”