

CHENNAI

DRI seizes over 1,400 star tortoises near Pudukottai

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They were kept in a godown to be smuggled abroad; two persons from Bengaluru arrested, car seized

A team of the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) on Thursday seized as many as 1,487 live star tortoises kept in a godown near Pudukottai to be smuggled abroad.

Acting on intelligence inputs, a DRI team from Bengaluru with assistance from their Madurai, Tuticorin and Tiruchi counterparts raided the godown at Rangammalchathram on the outskirts of Pudukottai town and found the live star tortoises kept in bags and cartons.

Brought from A.P.

The star tortoises were brought from Andhra Pradesh and kept at the godown to be smuggled abroad, said sources.

This is the biggest seizure of star tortoises by the DRI in the central region in recent times.

Information regarding the seizure was conveyed to the Forest Department officials in Pudukottai.

Two persons from Bengaluru, Burhan and Mohamed Hameed, who were allegedly involved, were arrested by the DRI team.

Destination Malaysia?

The sources suspect that the star tortoises were meant to be smuggled to Sri Lanka and from there to Malaysia, where the demand for the species is high. The seized tortoises were later handed over to the Forest Department, and detailed inquiries were conducted with the accused before they were arrested. The owner of the godown was also questioned by the DRI team, which also seized a car allegedly used by the smugglers. Pudukottai Collector S. Ganesh inspected the spot from where the star tortoises were seized.