



Illegal marine export: 1,600 kg shark bones seized

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The contents of the consignment weighing 1,600 kg raised suspicion among DRI officials who consulted a research institution that confirmed the cargo contained a mixture of bones of different species, a majority of them shark bones.

In a first, the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) seized a consignment of shark bones from Bengaluru that was being exported to South-East and East Asian countries for exotic delicacies at star hotels and cuisines. The exporter, importer, transporter and all others involved will be booked under appropriate sections of the Customs' Act, a senior DRI official told DH.

DRI officials received information about the illegal export of marine products that were being sourced from the seas off Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka coasts and exported to Hong Kong.

The officials started following up on the leads and chanced upon a case where an exporter based out of Mangaluru was involved. Based on specific information, a consignment of an exporting firm based in Bengaluru was detained, where the description of the goods meant for export was mentioned as “dry fish parts”.

The contents of the consignment weighing 1,600 kg raised suspicion among DRI officials who consulted a research institution that confirmed the cargo contained a mixture of bones of different species, a majority of them shark bones. The bones were cartilaginous in nature and very porous. The DRI sent the samples to the National Bureau of Fish Genetic Resources (NBFGR) in Lucknow to ascertain the exact species of sharks.

The NBFGR notified the DRI that the consignment had bones of three species of sharks that were listed as vulnerable in the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). The species were identified as *Alopias pelagicus* (Pelagic Thresher Shark), *Isurus oxyrinchus* (Short Fin Mako shark) and *Carcharhinus falciformis* (Silky Shark). All the three species were listed under Appendix-II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES), and are restricted for exports.

During detailed investigation, it was established that the marine materials were procured from Kochi with the help of some suppliers, after which detailed operations were conducted in Bengaluru, Mangaluru, Kochi and Kozhikode to make a list of people involved.

The value of the seized consignment was not disclosed by the DRI as it would lead to people entering the trade in greed. The DRI officials also gathered that a similar consignment had left the country in July this year.