DRI seizes Red Sanders worth Rs. 11.70 crore under "Operation Rakth Chandan"

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In line with its commitment to preserve the natural heritage of the nation, **Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) has recovered 14.63 MT of Red Sanders**, estimated at **Rs 11.70 crore** in the international market, from a consignment that was stuffed at ICD Sabarmati, and which was to be exported to Sharjah, UAE.

Intelligence was developed by DRI that red sanders logs were concealed in an export consignment declared to contain "*assorted toiletries*", for being smuggled out of the country. Accordingly, **Operation *Rakth Chandan*** was launched and close surveillance was kept on the suspect export consignment.

Acting on the above intelligence, the suspect container was scanned through a 'container scanning device' which confirmed the presence of some goods in the shape of logs, and the absence of declared goods i.e. assorted toiletries. Accordingly, the container was examined by DRI, which revealed that it was fully stuffed with wooden logs of red colour that appeared to be Red Sandalwood. On de-stuffing, 840 wooden logs, having total weight of 14.63 MT, were found in the container. No other goods were recovered. Preliminary examination of the wooden logs by Range Forest Officers confirmed that the logs are of Red Sandalwood, which is prohibited for export. Hence, the same were seized under provisions of Customs Act, 1962. Further investigation regarding domestic movement of the goods, their transportation and the exporter concerned is in progress.

Red Sanders is a flora-species that is endemic to a distinct tract of forests in Eastern Ghats region of Andhra Pradesh and fall under 'endangered list' in the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List. Red Sanders is also listed in Appendix-II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wildlife Fauna and Flora (CITES). Its rich hue and therapeutic properties are responsible for its high demand across Asia, particularly China, for use in cosmetics, medicinal products and high-end

furniture/woodcraft. The export of Red Sanders from India is prohibited as per the Foreign Trade Policy.

In the fiscal years 2021-22 and 2020-21, during its operations across the country, DRI seized **95 and 96 MT of Red Sanders** respectively, estimated at over **Rs. 150 crore** in the international market. In **March 2022**, DRI seized **12.20 MT** of Red Sanders wood from a container in CFS, Krishnapatnam that was being smuggled to Malaysia along with cover cargo of *sand/cement chips/gravel and miscellaneous household items*. In the same month, **11.7 MT** of Red Sanders wood was seized at Mundra port, which was being smuggled out of India in the guise of export of "*tractor parts*". In **December 2021**, DRI seized **9.42 MT** of Red Sanders that was being smuggled out of India in the guise of export of "*cast iron pipes*" from ICD Tughlakabad, Delhi.

In **Nov-2021**, DRI examined an export container lying at ICD Piyala, Haryana resulting in recovery of **9.98 MT** of Red Sanders wood that was being smuggled out of India in the guise of export of "*Iron & Brass Builder Hardware items*". Immediate follow-up action led to examination of another container at Nhava Sheva port, which resulted in recovery of **12.16 MT of Red Sanders wood**. Another container, which had already sailed out of Nhava Sheva port for **Sanshui, China**, was also recalled from high seas, and its search led to the recovery of **12.03 MT** of Red Sanders wood. Thus, a total of **34.17 MT** of **Red Sanders wood**, having estimated value of over **Rs. 27 crore** in the international market, was seized in a single coordinated operation.

DRI remains committed to continuing its relentless crackdown against those attempting to compromise the economic frontiers of India and misappropriating her rich natural heritage.

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