



Smuggling of Exotic Macaws



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Why in News

Recently, the **Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI)** has busted a wildlife syndicate (smuggling group) which was involved in smuggling of exotic macaws from Bangladesh.

The joint operation was carried out in coordination with the **Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB)** and the Customs Department at the Kolkata airport.

Key Points

- **The Joint Operation:**
 - The cargo containing 22 exotic birds which had been smuggled in through the Bongaon area of Indo-Bangla border, were seized at Kolkata airport.
 - The birds were identified as **hyacinth macaw, pesquet's parrot, severe macaw and hahn's macaw.**
 - The seized macaws are **protected under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)**, with **hyacinth macaw** being accorded the highest protection.
- **Provisions Related to Illegal Wildlife Trade:**
 - Illegally imported birds are **confiscated under Section 111 of the Customs Act, 1962** which is read with the **CITES provisions and the Foreign Trade Policy (Import-Export Policy) of India.**
 - Also, Sections 48 and 49 of the **Wildlife Protection Act** prohibit trade or commerce in wild animals, animal articles or trophies.

- **Concerns:**

- The possibility of spread of **zoonotic diseases** on account of smuggling in such exotic species is increasingly becoming a global concern against the backdrop of **Covid-19**.
- Illegal wildlife trade was ranked the **fourth largest transnational organised crime globally**, after the smuggling of narcotics, counterfeit goods and human trafficking.
- West Bengal and northeast India are vulnerable to cross-border wildlife smuggling because of their proximity to the Bangladesh and Myanmar borders, and to Thailand.
- Over the recent years, the DRI has seized a range of endangered species, including black-and-white ruffed lemur, **hoolock gibbons**, palm civets and Indian star tortoise etc.
- Another major concern has been the smuggling of elephant tusks and ivory products.
- Many international organisations involved in wildlife crime use the **Indo-Bangladesh Border** for various other illegal activities, such as **smuggling of drugs, commercial goods, and even gun-running**, apart from **illegal movement of foreign currency**.



Hyacinth Macaw

- **Scientific Name:** *Anodorhynchus hyacinthinus*,
- It is a parrot native to **central and eastern South America**.
- With a length of about one meter it is **longer than any other species of parrot**.
- It is the largest macaw and the **largest flying parrot species**.
- **Threat:** Habitat loss and the trapping of wild birds for the pet trade have taken a heavy toll on their population in the wild.
- **Protection Status:**

- **International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List: Vulnerable**
- **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES): Appendix I**

Wildlife Crime Control Bureau

- It is a **statutory multi-disciplinary body**, established by the Government of India under the **Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change**, to **combat organized wildlife crime** in the country.
- The Bureau has its headquarters in New Delhi.

Directorate of Revenue Intelligence

- It is India's **chief anti-smuggling intelligence, investigations and operations** agency.
- It works under the **Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC)**, Ministry of Finance.
- It is **headed** by a **Director General of the rank of Special Secretary** to the Government of India.
- DRI works to secure **India's national and economic security** by preventing the outright smuggling of **firearms, gold, narcotics, fake Indian Currency notes, antiques, wildlife and environmental products**.
- Moreover, it also works to prevent the proliferation of black money, commercial frauds and trade based money laundering.
- **Headquarters:** New Delhi

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