

India exempted from RST of CITES allowing trade in Red Sanders

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India has recently been removed from **Review of Significant Trade** (RST) for **Red Sanders**, under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (**CITES**).



[ref-IE]

Significance of the recent move:

- The **CITES RST** process enables **disciplinary action** in the form of **trade suspensions** directed at countries that do **not** meet their obligations.
 - **RST** is a process through which the **CITES Standing Committee** places **increased scrutiny** on the **exports** of a species from a country to determine if the Convention is being properly implemented.
- India was under the RST process for **Red Sanders** since **2004**.
- The removal of India from RST can be a major boost to farmers who grow **Red Sanders** for **export**.
- The red sanders wood sourced from **artificially propagation** (plantations) comprise a major part of **legal export** and hence it reduces any threat to the species.

About the Red Sanders:

- Red Sanders (*Pterocarpus santalinus*) is a tree species **endemic** to few districts in **Andhra Pradesh**.
 - It occurs mostly in the **Seshachalam hills** of the **Eastern Ghats**.
- Red Sanders belongs to the **family Fabaceae** and the genus **Pterocarpus**.
- It is highly prized for its use in making **traditional medicines**, **religious** artifacts, and as a source of **red dye**.
- Its common names are Yerra Chandanam, Chenchandanam, red sandalwood, Rakta Chandana, and saunderswood.
- It takes **20 to 30 years** to grow an optimal size red sander.
- The **Seshachalam Biosphere Reserve** was established by the Andhra Pradesh government for its protection.

Threats:

- The high demand for **Red Sanders wood** has led to illegal logging and trade, posing a threat to its survival.
- It is illegally traded to countries such as **China** and **Japan**.

Conservation Status:

- **The Wildlife Protection Act of 1972:** Schedule IV
- **CITES:** Appendix II
- **IUCN:** Near Threatened

About the CITES:

- The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) is an **international treaty** aimed at ensuring that **international trade** in wild animals and plants does **not** threaten their survival.
- It is **legally binding** on the Parties, but it does **not** take the place of national laws.
- It **regulates** the **international trade** of wild animals and plants to ensure their survival and prevent species from becoming **endangered** or **extinct** due to **over-exploitation**.
- It was adopted in **1973**, and entered into force in **1975**.
- **184 parties** have ratified the convention.
 - India has been a party to the CITES since **1976**.

Categorization as per the CITES:

- It **categorizes** species into **3 appendices** based on the level of protection they require.
- **Appendix I:** Species threatened with **extinction**.
 - Trade in these species is permitted only in **exceptional circumstances**.
- **Appendix II:** Species **not** necessarily threatened with **extinction**, but trade must be controlled to avoid utilization incompatible with their survival.
- **Appendix III:** Species that are **protected** in at least **one country**, which has asked other CITES parties for assistance in controlling international trade.

Regulatory Mechanism:

- CITES employs a **permit system** to regulate international trade.
- Member countries issue **permits** only after ensuring that the trade will **not** be detrimental to the **survival** of the **species involved**.

Enforcement:

- Member countries are required to adopt domestic legislation to implement CITES provisions.
- The Convention also establishes a Secretariat to assist countries in its implementation.

Meetings of the COP:

- The COP (Conference of the Parties) is the **supreme decision-making** body of CITES which meets every **2 to 3 years** to review the **implementation** of the Convention, make decisions on

changes to the **appendices**, and address other relevant issues.