

Operation Clean Art – 2019

A pan-India species specific enforcement operation code named as “Operation Clean Art” was launched by WCCB on 30th September 2019. The Operation envisaged to drag attention of the enforcement agencies within the country with a focus **to curb illegal wildlife trade in mongoose hairbrushes**. The operation includes Capacity building for enforcement agencies on identification of mongoose hair brush and other brushes from 1st October to 10th October, 2019, target Identification and Verification from 10th to 21st October, 2019 and finally Pan India Enforcement Operations on 24th October, 2019. The WCCB, Bureau Head Quarter informed and requested all the enforcement agencies like CBI, DRI, Police, Forest, Postal Departments etc., for their support towards the Operation Clean Art. The mongoose hair brushes are preferred over the synthetic brushes for the typical characteristic of resilience, paint retention capacity and sharp finishing rendered by them. Intelligence was developed by WCCB with regards to the manufacturing units, modus operandi of transportation of raw hair and finished mongoose hair brushes.

Intelligence was developed for Uttar Pradesh (17 Targets), Rajasthan (02 Targets), Kerala (50 Targets), Karnataka (02 Targets), and Maharashtra (20 Targets), Tamil Nadu (06 Target). The operation strategies were in collaboration with state forest and police agencies. The civil service societies such as WTI, Wildlife Welfare Association, Freelance-India and WPSI volunteers effectively supported WCCB in the operation. The WCCB collaborated with the State forest Departments and local police and raids were carried out in all identified targets

The seizure reported during the operation is as follows

State	Persons Arrested	Brushes	Raw Hair (Kg)
Uttar Pradesh	26	24060	113
Rajasthan	02	110	-
Maharashtra	09	29166	-
Tamil Nadu	06	1014	-
Total	43	54352	113

The accused investigation revealed that the illegal brush manufacturers receive raw hair from various parts of the country including Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Maharashtra etc through post and the manufactured mongoose hair brushes are sent through the private courier services concealed with synthetic brushes. Notices have been served to private transportation/Courier. Further investigation is on to understand the modus operandi and workout the network. A joint operation of WCCB New Delhi, UP Forest and Police team on 30th September 2018 at Sherkot in Bijnor, Uttar Pradesh resulted in seizure of 56,160 brushes and 165 Kg of raw hair along with the arrest of 06 accused. On 24th October 2019, the wanted accused and major manufacturers who could manage to flee last time Abdul Wali and Furkhan, were also arrested from Sherkot. During the operation, 43 accused have been arrested for being involved in illegal trade of mongoose hair brushes. A total of 54,352 finished and semi-finished brushes and 133 Kg of mongoose hair was also seized from various parts of India. As per the reports available, roughly 30 to 40 gram of hair is collected from a mongoose after hunting. Out of which, only 20 to 22 gram will be useful for brush making. Therefore, for every Kg of brush making mongoose hair, minimum 20 adult mongooses are killed. India is home to 06 species of mongoose (*Herpestes sp*). Mongoose has been protected under Part II Schedule II of Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. The act provide for punishment of 03 to 07 years of imprisonment and up to Rs. 25,000 fine or both. Additional Director of Wildlife Crime Control Bureau, Ms. Tilotama Varma has appreciated the concern shown and cooperation extended by the various enforcement agencies particularly State Forest and Police Departments in enforcement activities. Ms. Varma also appreciated the Bureau officials Mr. H V Girisha and Mr. M. Morranko Regional Deputy Directors and Inspectors A. Pragateesh and B. S. Khatia and all those associated with the operation .



