

National Biodiversity Authority sanctions 82 Lakh for Red Sanders Conservation in Andhra Pradesh under Access and Benefit Sharing Mechanism

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The National Biodiversity Authority (NBA), headquartered in Chennai, has sanctioned an amount of ₹82 lakh to the Andhra Pradesh Biodiversity Board for the conservation of the endemic plant species Red Sanders (*Pterocarpus santalinus*). The initiative is aimed at raising one lakh saplings of Red Sanders, which will subsequently be supplied to farmers, thereby contributing to the Trees Outside Forests (ToF) programme, and thus marking a significant step towards conserving a species unique to the region.

The funding has been provided from the benefit-sharing amount collected from users of Red Sanders and is being channelled back to the concerned stakeholders for conservation-related activities. These funds are in addition to the sale proceeds or sale values realised by stakeholders. The sanction demonstrates the application of the Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) mechanism under the Biological Diversity Act, 2002 (amended in 2023). The ABS mechanism regulates access to biological resources, while ensuring fair and equitable sharing of benefits with beneficiaries including local communities, individuals and Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs). The initiative thus demonstrates how policies can transform conservation into community-driven action.

Red Sanders, native to the Southern Eastern Ghats and found particularly in the districts of Anantapur, Chittoor, Kadapa, and Kurnool, has been under heavy threat due to its high commercial value, leading to rampant smuggling. The species is protected under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, and listed under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), which strictly regulates its international trade.

NBA has already released over 31.55 crore to the Andhra Pradesh Forest Department for various conservation and protection activities related to Red Sanders in the past. The present release is expected to flow directly into grassroots-level conservation involving Biodiversity Management Committees. Local and tribal communities will participate in nursery development, plantation and long-term care, creating employment, promoting skill-building and enhancing local stewardship in conservation of biological resources.

The initiative not only strengthens India's National Biodiversity Targets and further reinforces the country's commitment to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) at the global stage.

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