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VELVET CONTRABAND

The Times of India recently reported that in Chennai the Railway Police and Railway Protection Force (RPF) personnel foiled an attempt to smuggle a huge consignment of deer antler at Chennai Central railway station. The antlers were packed in 32 parcels weighing 560kg and addressed to a trading company in New Delhi. Antlers in some of the parcels were sliced up.

The contraband was seized after police and the RPF received a tip-off from the commercial taxes department. The personnel turned suspicious when a company staffer brought 32 parcels to the booking counter. He was about to book it by giving false information about the contents of the parcels. However, checks revealed that they contained antlers, which are a prohibited item.

Initial investigation revealed that the consignment was supposed to be smuggled to Germany from New Delhi. "This is the largest ever haul of antlers at a railway station," said a railway official.

Forest Department officials confirmed that the consignment contained deer antlers. They could not fix a value for it. Sources said antlers would fetch huge money in the international market. They are often smuggled from India to China to make traditional medicine and decorative pieces.