## King Cobra Venom and Three Big Cat Skins Seized in Western Ghats

- DRI seizes suspected two litres of King Cobra venom and 3 big cat skins, firearms in Maharashtra; six poachers apprehended
- DRI cracks down on two separate illicit wildlife trafficking networks active around Western Ghat Region in Maharashtra

*The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI), through two intelligence-led operations on **25–26 November 2026**, dismantled separate wildlife trafficking networks operating in Maharashtra's Western Ghats region, apprehending **six individuals** and seizing suspected endangered wildlife products.*

*1. Operation Venom Shield – Seizure of 2 Litres of King Cobra Venom (Pune)*

- ***Date:** 25 November 2026.*
- *Acting on specific intelligence, DRI kept surveillance on a stock trader-turned-social media influencer allegedly involved in illegal venom trading.*
- *The operation was conducted during the Kartik Purnima religious congregation near the Indrayani River on the outskirts of Pune.*
- *Three individuals were apprehended following interception and a foot chase.*
- ***Seizure:** Two bottles containing approximately **2 litres of suspected King Cobra (Ophiophagus hannah) venom**.*
- *A DRI officer sustained injuries due to venom spillage during the operation.*
- *The three accused and seized venom were handed over to the Maharashtra Forest Department for further investigation and prosecution.*

*2. Operation Feline Vigil – Seizure of Three Big Cat Skins and Poaching Weapon (Navi Mumbai)*

- ***Date:** 26 November 2026.*
- *Acting on intelligence regarding attempts to sell wildlife trophies through social media, DRI intercepted a suspect in the Panvel area.*
- *Initial recovery included two suspected animal skins:*
  - *Tiger (Panthera tigris).*
  - *Leopard (Panthera pardus).*
- *Subsequent investigation and search of a residential complex in Navi Mumbai resulted in the recovery of:*

- *One suspected Cheetah (Acinonyx jubatus) skin.*
- *One **.177 calibre (4.5 mm) break-barrel air rifle, Model 23**.*

- *Preliminary investigation indicated that the leopard skin bore a suspected gunshot wound inflicted using the recovered air rifle.*
- ***Total seizure:** Three big cat skins (Tiger, Leopard and Cheetah) and one air rifle.*
- *Three individuals were apprehended and handed over, along with the seized articles, to the Maharashtra Forest Department.*

*3. Legal Provisions*

- *King Cobra, Tiger, Leopard and Cheetah are listed under **Schedule I of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972**.*
- *These species enjoy the highest degree of legal protection.*
- *Hunting, capture and unauthorised possession, as well as trade in these animals, their derivatives and trophies, are prohibited under the Act.*

***Significance:** The back-to-back operations highlight DRI's efforts to dismantle organised wildlife trafficking syndicates, combat illegal trade in endangered species and protect India's biodiversity.*

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In back-to-back intelligence-led enforcement operations focused on curbing illegal wildlife trade and protecting endangered species, officers of the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) dismantled two separate illicit wildlife trafficking networks active around Western Ghat Region in Maharashtra, apprehending six individuals and seizing suspected King Cobra venom alongside big cat skins and a poaching weapon.

***Operation Venom Shield: Seizure of 2 litre Cobra Snake Venom in outskirts of Pune***

Acting on specific intelligence that a stock trader-turned-social media influencer was trading in illegal venom, DRI officers mounted sustained surveillance on **November 25, 2026**, during the Kartik Purnima religious congregation on the outskirts of Pune, where the suspect was scheduled to meet a middleman and a prospective buyer.




Navigating dense crowds and challenging terrain near the Indrayani River, officers intercepted the suspects following a prolonged foot chase and apprehended all three individuals. A search yielded two bottles containing approximately **2 litres of suspected King Cobra (*Ophiophagus hannah*) venom**. In the course chase, DRI officer was also injured due to spillover of venom. The seized venom and the three apprehended persons have been handed over to the Maharashtra Forest Department for further investigation and prosecution under applicable laws.

***Operation Feline Vigil: Seizure of 3 distinct large cat Skins along with Poaching in Navi Mumbai***

In a separate operation on **November 26, 2026**, officers of the DRI, acting of specific intelligence regarding attempts to sell wildlife trophies in Navi Mumbai via social media. Officers intercepted a suspect in the Panvel area and recovered a bag containing two skins—apparently of a **Tiger (*Panthera tigris*)** and a **Leopard (*Panthera pardus*)**.Follow-up questioning led to a search at a residential complex in Navi Mumbai, where two female occupants were found in possession of one suspected **Cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus*) skin** along with a **.177 calibre (4.5 mm) break-barrel air rifle (Model 23)**. Preliminary inquiry indicates the leopard skin bears a suspected gunshot wound inflicted with this rifle. The three skins (one each of Tiger, Leopard, and Cheetah), the air rifle, and the trophies were seized. The three apprehended individuals and the seized items have been handed over to the Maharashtra Forest Department for further investigation.



King Cobra (Ophiophagus hannah), Tiger (Panthera tigris), Leopard (Panthera pardus) and Cheetah (Acinonyx jubatus) are all listed under Schedule I of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972, and are accorded the highest degree of legal protection. Hunting, capture and unauthorised possession of these species, as well as any trade or dealings in these animals, their derivatives or trophies, are prohibited under the Act.

These back to back operations show DRI's unwavering commitment to dismantling organized wildlife crime syndicates and safeguarding India's biodiversity.