

'Rice worth ₹45,000 crore illegally exported from Kakinada Port in last 5 yrs'

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Rice worth ₹45,000 crore has been 'illegally' exported from Kakinada Port to Africa in the last five years, according to N Manohar, Minister for Civil Supplies, Food and Consumer Affairs, Andhra Pradesh.

Sharing details of the illegal export of rice after the seizure of West-Africa-bound cargo ship *Stella L Panama*, the Minister on Sunday said godowns where rice was allegedly hoarded are being raided since June.

INSPECTION BID

The officials seized 640 tonnes of PDS rice. Acting on a tip-off about 38,000 tonnes of rice being loaded on to the

ship, Deputy Chief Minister K Pawan Kalyan, along with officials, had attempted to conduct an inspection of the ship.

When he was refused permission by the port security, he ordered the seizure of the vessel on November 29. The seized PDS rice was released under a bank guarantee by 'some' exporters and eventually found its way to the Africa-bound ship.

"For the last five years, nobody was allowed inside the port for verification and there was no clarity on the exporters and their permits. We understand that the PDS rice was diverted for exports in large quantities," said Manohar said.

A thorough investigation into the matter is currently under way, he added.