

# A can of tuna scam opens: Govt incurs a whopping ₹1.4 crore meaty loss

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CONCERTED efforts by a group of officers of Lakshadweep Development Corporation Ltd (LDCL) to bury a major scam involving tuna meat, allegedly destroyed marking it as inedible, has failed with a whistle blower raking it up and approaching the Union Ministry seeking probe.

It was in 2012 that the LDCL decided to destroy the tuna cans manufactured by LDCL's Tuna Canning Factory and stored at LDCL's Chalapuram godown in Kozhikode. As per the records, the LDCL invited Expression of Interest (EoI) in June 2012 from firms having incineration facility for destruction of deteriorated canned fish products. The cans, each priced at ₹95, were handed over to a private firm in Palakkad for destroying. But as per the inside sources, the cans were re-labelled and sold in the market. The money generated from the deal was shared with the officials who connived with the private players.

As per the whistle-blower, the tuna meat was edible and fit for consumption.

Suspecting foul play in the move, the whistle-blower gave four tins which he had in his possession from godown for testing at the Central Institute of Fisheries Technology (CIFT), Kochi which cleared the tuna meat for human consumption.

"I gave the tins for test in May 2013, the expiry month marked in the can. But the test results dated June 27, 2013 revealed that the meat was edible for consumption. We don't know on what ground the then LDCL officers decided to destroy the cans causing huge loss to the government. Even no committee was formed to look into the contamination of the cans as alleged by a section of officers. The government lost ₹1.4 crore due to the corruption," the whistle-blower told 'Express'.

When contacted, officers at LDCL who were then holding key posts, wriggled out saying that they had no role in it as the decision to destroy the cans was taken by higher officers. "I am not in a position to reveal much details to media," said an officer who was in charge of the go-down in 2012.

## FISHY MATTER



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