

Pemphis Talk

Pemphis meets Senior Superintendent of Maldives Customs Service.

Hussain Hameed



Procedure followed by Customs when dealing with imported species

Since Customs is an enforcement agency, we follow laws and regulations set by policy making institutes. As per norm, Customs will ensure the species to be imported have been granted permissions from the relevant institutes.

If the species is found to be illegal, Customs will confiscate the species and handover to the relevant authorities; in required cases, extermination of the species will be carried out in presence of the relevant authorities.

Experience sharing of Customs with other countries:

Illegal doings along the border are shared with Regional Intelligence Liaison Office, World Customs Organization and countries of interests as well.

Most Common Cases:

Snakes and Birds

Trend in the imports of Alien Species:

A study is required to derive the actual statistics but with regard to the cases we can assume that the **trend is definitely not decreasing.**

Highest priority of Customs:

Narcotics comes first, followed by others

Advice to the general public on this matter:

The importers should know legal status of the subject to be imported. People should find out information about legal and illegal species before trying to import it. **Individuals should bare their responsibility towards the wellbeing of the nation before their own personal amusements.** Don't get involved in any illegal activity even if it's related to a friend of a family member. The general public is not aware. **People should share the information with customs or police about alien species; (if it's being smuggled into the country or if anyone is in possession of such a species).** There is a mechanism in which information could be shared without disclosing who you are.

Health and Safety concerns of Customs officers when dealing with these species

Since Customs is an authority working at the frontlines the threat of such an event is there. As per health and safety Customs may always not be prepared in terms of work health and safety since such events would be isolated and dispersed.

Mechanism in identifying alien species:

At present there is no such mechanism formulated, but we are in need of one. Customs do have some difficulties therefore we need more training to be informed of the species.

Emergency plan, such as a virus infected shipment:

At the moment we lack a plan; but we are formulating such a plan which covers the required procedures.

Customs perspective on the relation between illegal imports of species and narcotics:

These species have been confiscated from Police operations regarding narcotics, so therefore it is known that there is a link between these two. With respect to the available information, drug dealers have these exotics as their pets.

Challenges faced by Customs in dealing with Alien Species:

Customs are required to check a lot of areas; it is fairly easy to check the airport passenger terminal area while Customs face difficulties in the air-cargo area. With the dispersion of sea vessels and the marine routes poses the greatest challenge for customs.

Another challenge is that the lack of coordination between the institutes working at the border. **To have a dedicated law and regulation to tackle the issue would be one of the solutions while implementing a documented rigid coordinating system to manage the ports among the relevant authorities and stakeholders.**

Public awareness and awareness campaigns regarding the issue is inadequate. **It is important to step up these campaigns as it is not just Customs officers who should be aware of this.**

Reason for the demand in smuggling Alien Species:

As per Customs perspective the demand is dependent upon **two factors; import duty and legality of the subject.** If the import duty is high or if the subject is banned or illegal; smuggling and demand does increase along with the associated profit of the sale.