*REQUEST OF THE CUSTOMS DEPARTMENT TO THE VILLAGE HEADS/FISHERMEN HEADS AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC OF MANAMELKUDI TALUK.*

Recently, the Customs department received intelligence from sources that some persons pertaining to the coastal villages of Manamelkudi Taluk have certain indulgence with the offender from outside their village who could attempt gold smuggling into India and hence you all are advised to be aware of the consequences of such acts.

It is earnestly requested to go through the advice mention bellow to escape the trap laid by the smugglers and help yourself not to be a victim of circumstances.

In order to relieve you from the basic doubts such as:- i) Why gold is smuggled into India? ii) How does it happens through sea and air ? iii) How the youngsters become pray to such traps and used as a tool to such acts and consequently ended up in prison life? How do those who abetting this crime are caught and punished?. People may create awareness about this among themselves by going through this simple laymen pamphlets which is suffice to understand the Customs related offences and punishments.

1. Why gold is smuggled into India?

In India, compared to the countries abroad, the requirement of Gold is more as a result of which the price is also more. Since the maximum duty on gold is around 36%, and even if a citizen is willing to pay the duty he/she cannot bring more than 1kg of gold and hence being smaller in size it is easily concealed in various forms and smuggled into India through sea and air, in the pretext of fishermen and air passengers, respectively. People indulge in this kind of activity for the greed of money. Such people are indulging themselves in such activity alone or with their aid. Mostly they are very much caught in their first venture itself due to the sheer watchfulness of the revenue authorities.

1. How does smuggling take place through Sea?

From the Srilankan coast, Tamilnadu coast is the only destination smugglers venture for gold smuggling since it is easily accessed through sea in the pretext of fishermen from the south east coast of Tamilnadu due to its proximity and that could be covered in 30 mnts to 45 mnts in a speed boat. Mostly it is the smuggling agent who could speak both tamil and singalam fluently buy the task of smuggling of gold from the seller at Colombo and handover the gold to the buying agent in India. These professional offenders take the help of the local men at the coastal village from where they plan to operate. These offenders do not operate in a hostile area or from an area where they could not get adequate local support. They travel to a convenient location at the international sea between Colombo and India and get the gold exchanged from the Colombo agent who might be waiting for them. Sometimes, the landing agent from Colombo in the guise of fishermen directly reaches the Indian Coast and delivers the Gold. Hence, they somehow escape the interference of Navy, Coastal Police and the Customs, engaged in patrolling. Once reaching the Indian shore they immediately reach the nearest hideout and after safely concealing the gold, they are transported through road to inland destinations. It is mostly during this time that the DRI or the Customs strike the offenders which results in seizure of the smuggled gold and arrest of the offenders. During subsequent action by the authorities, all the persons connected to the smuggling will be subjected to punishment such as penalty or imprisonment, sometimes both, apart from losing the ownership of the gold and paying duty their on, as per the provisions of the Customs Act,1962.Due to the individuals’ criminal act, their family suffer at large.

1. How does smuggling take place in the pretext of Air passenger?

In Tamilnadu, after Chennai, Trichy Airport handles more International passengers, though few International flights are operated from Madurai and Coimbatore Airports. From all parts of Tamilnadu, poor people with the help of local agents, travel abroad to places like Dubai, Malaysia and Singapore for a better earning in order to support their family at home. Most of them are laborers who would be returning home after a while, on a brief vocation. These people were used as a trump card by smugglers as a tool for smuggling gold into India. The victim would be approached through his friend or through a person introducing himself in the airport instantly talking with a sweet tongue or mostly through the travel agent where he has booked his ticket , requested to do an urgent favour on his way back to his home in India. The inexperienced pax would be convinced that they would give him a small parcel that has to be handed over to their counterpart waiting to receive the parcel in India and once the pax comes out of the Customs clearance and approaches the exit gate of the destained Airport, it would be collected by them. At one point, the pax would yield to do this kind of tactical eloquence and accepted to do the favour. Sometimes the pax would be assured of a drop to his home in a taxi and hence the poor pax would be tempted to take the offer. So the parcel said to contain a toy or an emergency lamp or confectionery packet would be containing gold bar/s or cut pieces, in a well concealed manner. The photograph of the pax & contact number would be sent through mail or whatsup at the receiving end. Once the pax alighting from an airport such as Trichy International Airport, after immigration formalities, the pax would be allowed into the X-ray scanner gate way at the entry point of the Customs area where the hand luggage and the person would be allowed to pass through. At this point, or during collecting the luggage, the pax would be caught for processing gold without valid document/non-declaration and for concealing the gold. The pax only then came to realise that he was deceived. Though, the pax may state that he was not cautious and unaware about the parcel containing gold, his act would amount to smuggling in the purview of the Customs Act and action would be taken resulting in the arrest of the pax. This is seen as an everyday scenario in Chennai/Trichy International Airports. As per law, the punishment would be the same as awarded to the person caught smuggling via Sea. Here, the pax may not return abroad after the leave period and hence lose the job and may not ever renew job contract and thus his family would be subject to financial hardship apart from suffering the mental agony caused by him, who was once a bread winner.

Similarly, pax with the similar traits and pursuits described above are chosen for smuggling of Narcotic substances while leaving India to East Asian countries by drug offenders from India. They adopt similar modus operandi to convince a pax to deliver parcels containing narcotic substances, which are mostly concealed in groceries in small pockets. During check in, his luggage in the x-ray machine would be separated on suspicion for containing drug and confirmed positive with the help of the drug kit. The pax would be out of his wit when he comes to know that he is in deep trouble. Subsequently, as per the existing provisions of the Customs Act and NDPS Act, the pax would face non-bail able arrest proviso for at least five to ten years, depending on the nature and quantity of the drug attempted for smuggling. In case, if the pax escapes during screening of his luggage, while landing down in countries like Malaysia, Singapore and Colombo or Dubai, if he is caught, capital punishment is awarded as these countries consider drug trafficking as an act of war against their state and its sovereignty.

Persons engaging in this kind of smuggling activities are mostly appear to be youngsters and if you happen to be the village head, a responsible parent/brother/friend, you may share the above subject among yourselves and with the illiterate neighborhood, to create awareness about the Customs offences and punishments awarded to the persons involved or abetting to such act. *Doing an offensive act, even out of ignorance shall only be seen as a crime, in the perception of Law.*

To conclude, we emphasize that it is your responsibility to see that no such incidence amounting to smuggling happen at your village as such incidences does not happen without some local support. So if you get any information regarding suspicious individuals and activity amounting to smuggling, you may share the information immediately by contacting us through the mobile numbers mentioned in the first page top of the pamphlet. The details of the individuals who share such intelligence shall be kept confidential. Superintendent Customs Office, Manamelkudi