

1,500 aquarium fish, corals seized at Manila pier

July 13 2012



A visitor views the inside of an aquarium tank in Manila in 2009. Philippine authorities seized some 1,500 live aquarium fish and about 150 live pieces of brain coral at a Manila pier Friday just before they were to be shipped to Japan.

Philippine authorities seized some 1,500 live aquarium fish and about 150 live pieces of brain coral at a Manila pier Friday just before they were to be shipped to Japan.

The fish and corals in water-filled plastic bags stored in styrofoam boxes were seized by quarantine officers, said fisheries bureau law enforcement chief Andres Menguito.

He said the fish and corals were headed for Japan and likely being smuggled because there was no permit to export them. Nobody who had been transporting the aquatic species could be found.

"The quarantine officers were able to inspect the cargo. Perhaps when the person in charge of the fish saw some quarantine officers were already inspecting, they disappeared," Menguito told AFP.

The officer expressed hope suspects could be traced through documents used to bring the fish, hidden inside some cartons, to the pier.

The export of live [aquarium fish](#) without a permit is forbidden, and gathering or possessing corals is illegal in the Philippines.

A conviction for those crimes can lead to up to eight years in prison, Menguito said.

Environmentalists have previously warned excessive harvesting of ornamental fish and other [marine resources](#) from the Philippines could threaten the country's [fish stocks](#) and other sea life.

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