

Customs Clearance Facilitation Committee being set up for Expeditious Customs clearance of goods

A high-level administrative body at each seaport and airport would be established with the approval of the Cabinet Secretary, to ensure expeditious Customs clearance of imported and export goods.

In this regard it is seen that in terms of the Customs Act, 1962 read with the relevant rules and regulations, imported and export goods are subjected to certain legal and procedural formalities before being permitted clearance by Customs. These requirements include the submission of prescribed documents and adherence to laid down procedures before an appropriate legal order is given by the Customs officer permitting the importer/exporter to clear the goods for the intended purpose. If provisions of other Allied Acts are attracted in respect of the imported/export goods, permission to clear the goods is given by the Customs only after getting the suitable clearance/response/NOC from the Government Department/agency concerned.

Some of the major Departments/agencies that are involved in Customs clearance process are as follows:

- (i) Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)/Port Health Officer (PHO)
- (ii) Plant Quarantine Authorities
- (iii) Animal Quarantine Authorities
- (iv) Drug Controller of India (CDSO)
- (v) Textile Commissioner
- (vi) Wild Life Authorities

In addition, the Port Trusts/Airport Authority/Custodians and Railways play a critical role in the Customs clearance process by providing the required infrastructure and facilities. Other local agencies concerned with logistics, manpower etc. which operate in the seaports and airports also facilitate the Customs clearance process.

Since the aforementioned regulatory agencies are critical contributors to the Customs clearance process of

imported and export goods, a delay in receipt of a clearance from one regulatory agency holds up the Customs clearance of the said goods. Lack of adequate infrastructure in the seaport or airport or testing laboratories, etc. also contribute to delay in the clearance of imported and export goods. Any other deficiency on account of other stakeholders also enhances the dwell time of cargo as well as the overall turnaround time of carriers. Another important reason for the delay is the improper coordination or absence of efficient coordination amongst Government agencies and other stakeholders involved in the Customs clearance process. Therefore, a view has emerged that these deficiencies can be best removed by institutionalizing at each seaport and airport an administrative mechanism with responsibility of expeditious Customs clearance of imported and export goods and for resolving related trade grievances in a time bound manner.

Accordingly, the Board has decided to set up a Customs Clearance Facilitation Committee (CCFC) at every major Customs seaport and airport with immediate effect. The CCFC would be headed by the Chief Commissioner of Customs/Commissioner of Customs in charge of the seaport and airport concerned. Its membership would include the senior-most functionary of the following departments/agencies/stakeholder at the particular seaport/airport:

- (i) Food Safety Standards Authority of India/Port Health Officer (PHO)
- (ii) Plant Quarantine Authorities
- (iii) Animal Quarantine Authorities
- (iv) Drug Controller of India (CDSO)

The CCFC would be headed by the Chief Commissioner of Customs/Commissioner of Customs in charge of the seaport and airport concerned.

- (v) Textile Committee
- (vi) Port Trust / Airport Authority of India / Custodians
- (vii) Wild Life Authorities
- (viii) Railways/CONCOR
- (ix) Pollution Control Board
- (x) Any other Department / Agency / stakeholder to be co-opted on need basis.

- (iv) Having internal consultations to speed up the clearance process of imported and export goods and recommending best practices thereto for consideration of CBEC / Departments / Agencies concerned; and
- (v) Resolving grievances of members of the trade and industry in regard to clearance process of imported and export goods.



Terms of Reference for the CCFC are as follows:

- (i) Ensuring and monitoring expeditious clearance of imported and export goods in accordance with the timeline specified by the parent ministry/ Department concerned;
- (ii) Identifying and resolving bottlenecks, if any, in the clearance procedure of imported and export goods;
- (iii) Initiating Time Release Studies for improvement in the clearance time of imported and export goods;

The CCFC shall meet once a week or more frequently, if considered necessary by the chair. The Board desires that Chief Commissioners of Customs/Customs and Central Excise shall immediately establish the CCFC at each seaport and airport in their jurisdiction. The CCFC shall be headed by the Chief Commissioners of Customs/Customs and Central Excise at the place of headquarters of these officers. At other places it would be headed by the Commissioners of Customs/Customs and Central Excise in charge of the seaport/airport.

The establishment of the CCFC and its terms of reference may be given wide publicity by issue of suitable Trade Notice/Public Notice. The said Trade Notice/Public Notice should indicate the contact numbers of the chair of the CCFC. A copy of the order establishing the CCFC may be endorsed to the Board latest by 24-04-2015.

Chief Commissioners of Customs/Customs and Central Excise are also required to periodically review the working of the CCFC and its impact on reducing delays in the Customs clearance time of imported and export goods and in resolving related trade grievances. ■

Tiruchi Customs forms panels to ensure faster clearance for goods

In a move aimed at ensuring expeditious clearing of export and import goods and to synergise the operations of various agencies, the Tiruchi Customs has constituted a couple of Customs Clearance Facilitation Committees (CCFC) across its jurisdiction. Encompassing multiple agencies, the committees have been constituted in Tiruchi and Nagapattinam / Cuddalore, which have international airport and sea ports respectively.

The committees have been formed on the direction of the Government of India to create a robust environment for doing business easily and to facilitate trade. The Commissioner of Customs, Tiruchi, would head both the committees which would meet once in a month. Ensuring and monitoring the expeditious clearing of import and export of goods, identifying and resolving bottlenecks, if any, in the clearance process, and holding consultations for faster clearance of goods are among the primary objectives of the panels. *Source: The Hindu*