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FM URGES CBEC OFFICERS TO MAKE SUSTAINED AND STRATEGIC EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE REVENUE TARGETS FOR CURRENT FISCAL YEAR; INAUGURATES TWO DAY ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF CHIEF COMMISSIONERS AND DIRECTORS GENERAL OF CBEC

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Union Finance Minister, Shri Pranab Mukherjee has urged the officers of Central Board of Excise & Customs (CBEC) to make sustained and strategic efforts throughout the year for the realisation of the challenging revenue target of Rs. 3,92, 908 crore for indirect taxes for 2011-12. He was addressing the Annual Conference of Chief Commissioners and Directors General of the Central Board of Excise and Customs at Vigyan Bhawan, here today. The theme of this year's conference is- **“Challenges before CBEC in the back drop of emerging to a surging Indian Economy”**.

The Finance Minister Shri Mukherjee congratulated the CBEC and its officers for not only exceeding last year's budgeted estimates, but also in exceeding the revised estimates by substantive margins. He said that the world economy is poised to get transformed into a multi-polarity global economy. For meeting the growth momentum and for India to be the flag bearer and to serve as a true growth pole, the Finance Minister stated that structural changes would need to be undertaken that will generate self-sustaining and inclusive growth.

Shri Pranab Mukherjee said that in the Budget proposals for 2011-12, he had outlined a significant legislative agenda for the financial sector. He said that a Financial Sector Legislative Reforms Commission (FSLRC) has been already set-up. The Finance Minister said that the RBI is in the process of issuing additional banking licences to private sector players. Discussions are underway to further liberalise the FDI policy. Major steps are being taken to simplify and place the administrative procedures concerning taxation, trade and tariff and social transfers on electronic interface, free of discretion and bureaucratic delays, the Minister added.

For Goods & Service Tax (GST), the Finance Minister Shri Mukherjee advised the officers that there must not be any let up in their preparatory work for GST. He said that for projects related to Goods and Service tax, a National Information Utility for CBEC has been approved by the Government on the recommendation of TAGUP, a Committee headed by Shri Nandan Nilekani.

The Finance Minister Shri Mukherjee said that in a globalised economy, the expectations of taxpayers from Department are rising exponentially which has led to increase in taxpayers' grievances across the country. To address this issue, the Government has decided to set up seven Indirect Tax Ombudsman, the Minister added. They will be located at Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata, Bengaluru, Ahmedabad and Lucknow. Using this establishment, CBEC can move for faster disposal of grievances leading to higher satisfaction level amongst the taxpayers, he said.

Finance Minister Shri Pranab Mukherjee expressed concern over avoidable litigation with taxpayers which has been continuously growing over the years. He said that this is not a healthy trend and requires introspection especially about routine filing of appeals. He said that a Committee was appointed, which recommended monetary limits for filing of appeals before the various appellate forums. These recommendations have been accepted and it is likely to reduce future litigation with taxpayers by around 20-25 per cent.

Shri Pranab Mukherjee asked the CBEC officers to make an honest endeavour to address the problems faced by their stakeholders in the quickest possible time. He said that they should strive to have all their formations Sevottam by 2014. He noted that the CBEC has undertaken a series of initiatives in the last two years towards e-Governance. He said that the IT initiatives should be taken forward by adopting innovating practices.

The Finance Minister Shri Mukherjee urged the officers that their focus on revenue collections should never be lost and they must aim at continuous evolvement and improvisation of their practices and procedures. He said that standardization of best practices and procedures will allow officers to further innovate and set a higher benchmark for practices and procedures.

Later, the Finance Minister Shri Mukherjee released a book entitled "A Manual on Infrastructure" brought out by Directorate of Human Resources of CBEC. Beside the Finance Minister, the Conference was also addressed by Shri Sunil Mitra, Finance and Revenue Secretary and Shri Sumit Dutt Majumdar, Chairman, CBEC. The two day Conference is deliberating in parallel sessions through four breakaway groups of Chief Commissioners and Directors General on contemporaneous issues relevant to indirect tax administration. This is necessary to lay down a road map for efficacious governance.

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