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**FINANCE MINISTER GIVES GO-AHEAD TO ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY FOR  
CENTRAL BOARD OF EXCISE AND CUSTOMS**

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In a first for any taxation department, the Union Finance Minister Shri Pranab Mukherjee has given his go-ahead to an “Environment Strategy” for the Central Board of Excise and Customs (CBEC) that would change the way business is done by the Customs, Central Excise and Service Tax officials.

CBEC’s ‘Environment Strategy’ formalizes a concept paper “*The Greening of Indian Customs*” that encompasses various measures - legal, enforcement, administrative etc. - to ensure the Department’s core functions are sensitive to our environment. This includes the mandated role of the Customs and its premier intelligence agency, Directorate Revenue of Intelligence (DRI) in implementing multilateral environmental agreements (Basel Convention, Cartagena Protocol, CITES, etc.) as well as relevant domestic laws (Customs Act, 1962, Environment Protection Act, 1988).

The new strategy recognizes the fact that environmental protection is of paramount importance for individuals and organizations thereby requiring a broad based approach. It underlines the fact that our environment is so critical a subject that it cannot be left only to the experts.

Some of the important elements of CBEC’s Environment Strategy include:

- (i) Training of officers for monitoring international trade in environmentally sensitive goods.
- (ii) Sensitizing officers of DRI, Customs (Preventive) etc. to enhanced detection of environmental violations.
- (iii) Creating database and disseminating relevant environmental information.
- (iv) Protecting frontline officers from hazardous substances by providing radiation detection kits etc.
- (v) Dematerializing documents and eliminating paper documentation.
- (vi) Promoting web-based external and internal communication.
- (vii) Developing and implementing green standards for infrastructure.

CBEC emphasizes that besides contributing to a cleaner environment, decisions such as reducing documentation would serve the objective of trade facilitation by reducing transaction costs.

**DSM/SS/GN**