

Import consignments: MCC EPZA declares '100 percent examination' mandatory

Model Collectorate Customs (MCC), Exports Processing Zone Authority (EPZA) in order to avoid undue exemptions, which is around Rs 30 billion per year, has declared '100 percent examination' mandatory for the clearance of import consignments. According to sources, the MCC EPZA has given US\$ 2 billion tax exemption on the imports worth US\$ nine billion during last 10 years, due to improper manual system, which encourages high misdeclaration on the import consignments.

Sources said that the customs department had not bothered to modernize its MCC EPZA since early 80's that led creating rooms for unscrupulous elements to provide serious financial shocks on account of undue tax exemptions to the national kitty.

Replying to a question, sources said that the collectorate had only three inspectors to examine 70 containers per day being carried out on three dilapidated wooden rams. "There are neither proper examiners for the examination of containers nor computerized clearance system to ensure smooth clearance process. The collectorate, which is still working under the standing order of collectorate preventive issued in 1983, badly needs sufficient workforce to put house in order," sources said.

When contacted high official in MCC EPZA assured not to hurt bona fide exporters and importers; adding that the said measure was taken to eradicate ill-practices being continued for years.

He said that delays in examination would not create any excessive financial burden in terms of demurrages and detentions on the trade and added that the collectorate had sent formal request to EPZA to get enough space for examination.

Meanwhile, Arshad Jamal Chairman Supreme Council of All Pakistan Customs Agents Association (APCAA) said that although the initiative taken by the MCC EPZA was in good faith, the same should have been adopted in phases because years of wrongdoings could not be cleansed in days. He appeared optimistic for the meeting to be convened by collector MCC EPZA on February 12, 2018, saying that APCAA would urge the collectorate to take the association on board and draft separate SOP for the clearance of import or exports consignments at EPZA.

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