



Trade Barriers:

Sri Lanka trade needs more govt co-ordination: official

Nov 30, 2010 (LBO) - Sri Lanka's government agencies involved in exports and imports need to co-ordinate better to minimise delays and smoothen trade, said Sarath Jayatilake, former Director General of Sri Lanka Customs.

Export consignments already checked by one agency are sometimes inspected again by a different agency, he told a stakeholders meeting on non-tariff measures organised by the Institute of Policy Studies, a think-tank.

A recent survey of importers and exporters found that the main non-tariff barriers they faced related mostly to certification and inspection, he said.

The survey on non-tariff measures was done by the Lanka Market Research Bureau on behalf of the International Trade Centre which helps countries like Sri Lanka to better understand the obstacles to trade experienced by businesses when complying with non-tariff measures.

NTMs are seen as increasingly becoming a major impediment to international trade and market access and the ITC aims to increase transparency and understanding about NTMs.

Some procedural delays are caused by the different requirements of different state agencies that monitor or approve shipments.

Procedural obstacles generated by the requirements of different government agencies through which exports go were cited as key problems by companies surveyed.

"Sometimes the tea board examines for tea and the customs again opens the same consignment which causes delays and costs money," said Jayatilake. "Therefore, we need better co-ordination and this co-ordination must be on a common platform."

Getting certificates to prove compliance with regulations locally as well as in the destination country took time and was also costly.

"Small firms have more technical matters like phyto-sanitary rules and getting certificates. For larger firms, it is more of certification issues."

"Larger firms are better organised to get the certificates but smaller firms do not have facilities to get it in advance," Jayatilake said. "So they need to arrange to get certificates well in time to minimise delays when it comes to the point of shipment."

"Although our exports are doing well, delays have costs and could lead to cancellation of shipments."

