



CBIC commemorates 10 years of India's Authorised Economic Operator (AEO) Programme; Outlines way forward and reaffirms commitment to trusted trade

**AEO Programme is pivotal in transforming India's customs
administration into a modern, trusted and facilitative system
aligned with the World Customs Organisation's SAFE
Framework of Standards: CBIC Chairman**

**CBIC Member (Customs) noted transformation of Customs
from a transaction-centric approach to a risk-based and
trust-oriented model of administration since the introduction
of the current AEO framework**

Posted On: 16 SEP 2026 3:21PM by PIB Delhi

The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) today celebrated a decade of India's Authorised Economic Operator (AEO) Programme with a commemorative event titled "AEO@10: Accelerating Growth, Enhancing Trust, Optimizing Trade" in New Delhi.



The event brought together policymakers, industry leaders, logistics stakeholders, WCO experts and Authorised Economic Operators to reflect on the programme's achievements and chart the roadmap for its future.

Addressing the gathering as Chief Guest, Shri Vivek Chaturvedi, Chairman, CBIC, underscored the pivotal role played by the AEO Programme in transforming India's customs administration into a modern, trusted and facilitative system aligned with the World Customs Organisation's SAFE Framework of Standards.



He noted that the programme has emerged as a cornerstone of India's trade facilitation architecture by promoting voluntary compliance, strengthening supply chain security and enabling faster, more predictable cross-border movement of goods. The CBIC Chairman outlined five big ideas for the next decade:

- technology-driven facilitation
- radical inclusivity for MSMEs
- seamless inter-agency coordination
- global leadership through expanded Mutual Recognition Arrangements, and
- synergy across indirect tax verticals

Highlighting CBIC's commitment to stakeholder-centric reforms, the Chairman announced the launch of a structured feedback response form on the AEO portal to enable continuous and systematic inputs from AEO entities and other stakeholders.



Drawing on Pillar 2 of the WCO SAFE Framework and the CBIC Citizens' Charter, he emphasised that trade is an equal partner in building a trusted ecosystem and that feedback must be continuous. He also referred to the Eligible Manufacturer Importer (EMI) Scheme, highlighted by the Union Finance Minister's in the Union Budget speech, as an important stepping stone that rewards early compliance and creates a natural pathway to higher AEO tiers.

In his address, Member (Customs), CBIC, recalled the transformation of Customs from a transaction-centric approach to a risk-based and trust-oriented model of administration since the introduction of the current AEO framework through Circular No. 33/2016-Customs. He underlined that voluntary compliance promotes good governance, reduces supply-chain risk and transaction costs, and that supply-chain security remains central to the resilience of India's trade ecosystem. He noted that important discussions at the annual Customs Consultative Group meeting held in Kolkata, together with representations from trade, have informed several trade-friendly process improvements now under consideration. These include a unified Standard Operating Procedure for uniform processing across zones; a clear checklist for applicants and Zonal AEO Programme Managers; a single-deficiency approach; time-bound processing; copying of deficiency communications to the applicant; a clarified position on financial solvency; and strengthening of dedicated Client Relationship Managers and trained validators, in line with the National Trade Facilitation Action Plan.



The Member (Customs) also stated that, in the same spirit of reducing compliance burden, documentation requirements under the EMI Scheme have already been rationalised through Circular No. 39/2026-Customs dated 3rd September 2026, bringing down the documents to be uploaded from ten to three, with effect from 15th September 2026.

The event marked the launch of the commemorative publication “A Decade of AEO in India: Celebrating Trusted Trade Partnerships”, documenting the evolution, milestones and impact of India’s AEO Programme over the past ten years, and incorporating contributions from CBIC officers, international partners, trade and industry. A stakeholder feedback survey on the AEO Programme was also announced to obtain structured inputs from industry for guiding future reforms. In addition, new AEO certificates were presented to select businesses, recognising their commitment to secure and compliant international trade.



In her welcome address earlier, Dr. Kavita Bhatnagar, Principal Commissioner and National AEO Programme Manager, highlighted the remarkable growth of the programme since its inception and emphasised the importance of continued collaboration between Customs and the trade community in building a trusted and resilient trading environment.



Representatives from leading industry bodies, including the Federation of Freight Forwarders' Associations in India (FFFAI), appreciated the significant contribution of the AEO Programme towards improving ease of doing business, reducing transaction costs and enhancing supply chain predictability. Leading AEO entities also shared their experiences, highlighting tangible benefits such as expedited customs clearance, improved operational efficiency and strengthened global business confidence.



India's AEO Programme has, over the past decade, become an important pillar of CBIC's trade facilitation initiatives by rewarding compliant businesses with simplified customs procedures and risk-based facilitation while maintaining robust supply chain security. **As of date, 5,967 entities — comprising importers, exporters, manufacturers, customs brokers, logistics operators and warehouse operators — have been certified under the AEO Programme across T1, T2, T3 and LO categories.**

The programme has steadily expanded its coverage of the logistics chain, digitised application processes, established dedicated AEO Cells, and introduced special facilitative provisions for MSMEs. As India continues to expand its engagement with trusted trading partners across the world, CBIC remains committed to further strengthening the AEO Programme through stakeholder-centric reforms, technology adoption, international cooperation and continuous feedback from trade, thereby contributing to the objectives of Viksit Bharat @2047 and making India an increasingly preferred destination for global trade and investment.

SR/KMN

(Release ID: 2310823) Visitor Counter : 327

Read this release in: Urdu , हिन्दी , Bengali