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#76



The Pivotal Role of Customs in Global Trade Facilitation



ASIA/PACIFIC
Regional Customs



The Pivotal Role of Customs in Global Trade Facilitation

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A Brief Note from the WCO Vice-Chairperson for the Asia/Pacific Region

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WCO Vice-Chairperson for the Asia/Pacific Region
Commissioner of Hong Kong Customs



Dear Esteemed Members of the WCO Asia/Pacific Region,

It is my great pleasure to present to you the 76th issue of the WCO Asia/Pacific Customs News, focused on the theme “The Pivotal Role of Customs in Global Trade Facilitation”. This issue features member administrations’ strategic commitment to advancing trade efficiency, regulatory transparency and institutional resilience.

In response to the strategy of economic integration, Customs administrations are increasingly recognised as essential facilitators of secure, predictable and inclusive cross-border trade. The Asia/Pacific region has implemented co-ordinated reforms, technological innovation and targeted capacity-building initiatives to align operational practices with international standards.

This volume highlights a diverse array of initiatives. Bangladesh and Pakistan give an account of their progress in digital clearance systems and inter-agency co-ordination. India and Sri Lanka demonstrate the application of artificial intelligence to enhance revenue

forecasting and operational insights. Thailand underscores the importance of valuation consistency, AEO programme development, and evolving responsibilities in the digital economy. Hong Kong’s Air-Land Fresh Lane showcases infrastructure-led facilitation of perishable goods. Samoa’s enforcement enhancements illustrate how strategic partnerships and resource optimisation can bring about impactful results.

The “Customs Appreciation” corner continues to honour the distinguished officers whose contributions have exemplified exceptional leadership, innovation and enforcement. Their achievements highlight the critical role of individual expertise and commitment in accomplishing institutional objectives.

Looking forward, the Asia/Pacific region will remain steadfast in the pursuit of a smarter, and more agile and collaborative Customs community. Let us continue to build on this strong foundation by sharing expertise, strengthening partnerships and advancing our shared mission to facilitate legitimate trade while safeguarding our world.

A Brief Note

**from the Secretariat Office of the
WCO Vice-Chairperson
for the Asia/Pacific Region**



Kin-kei LI

Head of Secretariat Office
WCO Vice-Chairperson for the Asia/Pacific Region
Assistant Commissioner (World Customs Organization) of Hong Kong Customs

Dear WCO Asia/Pacific Colleagues,

In this edition of the Asia/Pacific (A/P) Customs News, we are excited to explore the theme of “The Pivotal Role of Customs in Global Trade Facilitation”. This edition showcases diverse initiatives by member administrations and reflects how Customs continue to evolve in response to global trade dynamics.

The articles featured in this volume have highlighted how Customs authorities across the Asia/Pacific region are embracing innovation and strengthening institutional resilience. The articles focus on the integration of advance technologies, officer training, stakeholder engagement, valuation and Authorized Economic Operator (AEO) programs, and adaptation to growing digital trade etc. The experiences shared by members provide valuable insights into how our region is navigating through the digital economy landscape.

I would also like to update our recent activities. The 35th WCO A/P Regional Contact Points Meeting was successfully convened in Hong Kong between 14 and 17 October 2025, providing a valuable platform for exchanging perspectives and strengthening cooperation among A/P members. What comes next will be a thematic conference on Smart Customs in March 2026 in Hong Kong. I sincerely encourage all members to participate in this meaningful event, share their experiences and knowledge, and contribute their best practices.

Our A/P region not only responds to emerging challenges but also actively contributes to the advancement of modern trade practices. The initiatives have reflected our strong foundation of regional solidarity, technical innovation and institutional adaptability. Our continued efforts will aim to deepen cross-border collaboration and maintain a shared focus on enabling efficient, secure, and equitable global trade.



SPOTLIGHT

Asia/Pacific Customs News #76



The Pivotal Role of Customs in Advancing Trade Facilitation in Bangladesh

By Rizvi Mohammad Salahuddin

Introduction

Bangladesh Customs plays a crucial role in shaping the country's economic landscape and advancing trade facilitation. In today's interconnected global economy, customs administrations not only serve as revenue collectors but are also key enablers of trade efficiency and economic growth. For Bangladesh, which is preparing to graduate from Least Developed Country (LDC) status by November 2026, the role of Customs has become more critical than ever. As the country strengthens its integration into global value chains, the effectiveness, transparency, and adaptability of Bangladesh Customs will be essential for enhancing its global competitiveness.

Strategies and Best Practices for Enhancing Customs Processes

Bangladesh Customs has made significant strides in aligning with the World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) and World Customs Organization (WCO) standards. Several key strategies have been adopted to improve customs operations and trade facilitation:

Automation and Digitalization

The Bangladesh Single Window (BSW) is a groundbreaking initiative that integrates multiple government agencies into a single electronic platform, allowing for the streamlined submission of import/export documentation. This integration accelerates customs clearance, enhances transparency, reduces time and costs, and strengthens Bangladesh's overall trade competitiveness. Furthermore, the rollout of ASYCUDA World has reduced reliance on paper-based procedures, increasing the speed and transparency of customs operations.

Risk Management and Post-Clearance Audit (PCA)

The establishment of the Customs Risk Management Commissionate (CRMC), a dedicated office for risk management, has enabled a more strategic approach to trade facilitation by focusing inspection efforts on high-risk consignments. This targeted system expedites

clearance for compliant traders while enhancing overall operational efficiency.

Authorized Economic Operator (AEO) Program

The AEO Program plays a vital role in improving security, streamlining customs procedures, and promoting international trade. Participating businesses benefit from expedited processing, fewer physical inspections, and priority treatment, which significantly boost operational efficiency, reduces costs, and enhances confidence in the supply chain.

E-payment for Customs Duties:

E-payment systems streamline the payment process by integrating mobile financial services, banks, and online portals. This reduces paperwork, enhances efficiency, and supports faster customs clearance, contributing to Bangladesh's digital transformation and improved transparency.

Transparency and Predictability

The online publication of customs rules, advance rulings, and service standards have helped building greater trust and reduced uncertainty in trade processes. These efforts increase transparency, enabling businesses to navigate customs procedures with greater ease.

Challenges Faced by Bangladesh Customs

Despite the significant progress made in modernizing customs operations, several challenges continue to hinder optimal efficiency and effectiveness:

Port Congestion and High Trade Volumes

The Chattogram Port, Bangladesh's main seaport, handles over 90% of the country's trade, faces severe congestion and capacity limitations. This affects the speed of customs clearance and raises costs for importers and exporters, hampering Bangladesh's competitiveness in global markets.

Digital Divide and Infrastructure Gaps

Although the National Single Window and other digital trade platforms have made strides, full implementation still requires significant investment in IT infrastructure. Interoperability challenges between various government agencies can delay customs processing, especially in remote areas. Bridging the digital divide and ensuring widespread access to technology remains a key challenge for broader adoption.

Capacity Constraints

The increasing complexity of international trade requires continuous skill development for customs officers. To effectively manage modern trade

processes, Bangladesh Customs must invest in training its workforce in emerging technologies such as blockchain, artificial intelligence (AI), and data analytics. A skilled workforce is essential to fully harness the potential of digital systems and improve risk management frameworks.

Cybersecurity and Data Protection

As Bangladesh Customs continues to rely on digital platforms for customs processing and e-payment systems, the risk of cyberattacks and data breaches grows. Strengthening cybersecurity protocols and ensuring robust data protection are critical to safeguarding Bangladesh's digital trade infrastructure.

Balancing Facilitation and Enforcement

A key challenge for Bangladesh Customs is finding the right balance between facilitating trade and enforcing regulations. While the need to accelerate trade is paramount, Customs must also ensure compliance with international standards related to the prevention of illicit trade, Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) protection, and consumer safety. Striking a balance between speeding up trade and maintaining rigorous enforcement remain a complex task.

Conclusion

Bangladesh Customs is at the forefront of the country's aspirations to strengthen its position in global trade. By implementing strategic reforms, leveraging innovative technologies, and fostering collaborations with various stakeholders, Customs is transitioning into a modern, service-oriented organization. However, addressing the remaining challenges — such as port congestion, infrastructure gaps, and the need for continued capacity building — will be crucial for ensuring that Bangladesh not only facilitates trade effectively but also enhances its global competitiveness as it nears its LDC graduation.

About the Writer

Mr. Rizvi Mohammad Salahuddin serves for the Bangladesh Customs. He is a WCO Accredited Expert on IPR. Mr. Rizvi has over 14 years of experience in the trade facilitation, customs clearance process, and enforcement. Mr. Rizvi is a former Professional Associate (PA) at the Procedures and Facilitation Sub-Directorate of WCO. He is a WCO Scholar with a Master's in Public Finance (Customs) from the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (GRIPS), Tokyo.



Trade Facilitation and Customs Compliance in a VUCA World

Abstract

This paper attempts to provide an overview of how Fiji Revenue & Customs Service (FRCS) balances trade facilitation and Customs compliance as we enter an uncharted future laced with Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity – VUCA World¹ . In doing so, this paper provides practical approaches that Customs may employ for a doctrinal shift from the past system of managing compliance with authority. In the past, Customs invested a lot of resources into attempting to find non-compliance or errors, followed by issuance of demand notices and collection of duties and penalties from traders and travellers and close the matter. The strategy that this paper proposes is addressing both compliance and non-compliance. It promotes addressing root cause of non-compliance using internationally accepted tools and developing a culture to nurture compliant behaviour. On the other hand, it also rewards compliant behaviours with reward programs.

Introduction

The Customs operating environment has already been quite complicated from the outset due to the risks of trader non-compliance with the regulatory framework. The innovative modus-operandi employed by traders to avoid or evade duties and taxes has also resulted in the development of complicated nature of Customs regulatory framework. This has only exacerbated the complicated environment that Customs operate in

but the future adds new layers of unpredictability.

By employing principles of risk management in every facet of Customs work, resources are deployed towards those areas which are assessed to be having higher risk of occurrence of non-compliant behaviour² . It is the approach that Customs Officers in FRCS, like many other Customs administrations, have undertaken to fulfill its statutory duty of administering and enforcing Customs & Excise laws. The risk management principle is based on the premise of data mining and using past non-compliant behaviour in assessing and targeting those traders with higher risks of non-compliance.

The future, however, that we are advancing into is not only complicated, but complex. In a complex world, neither data mining, risk assessment nor any other tools such as artificial intelligence can predict the likelihood of a side-effect of an activity of compliance or enforcement. The analogy that best describes a complex world is “a butterfly flapping its wings in one part of the world can cause cyclone in another part of the world”. My emphasis being, no risk management tool can predict the likelihood of an event that would cause another butterfly effect such as a single video of law enforcement harsh action leading to global demonstrations and policy reviews in another country. That is the gravity and nature of complex environment that we are moving into the future.

Integrated Compliance Management Strategy to Facilitate Legitimate Trade

When compliance management (CM) is integrated with the principles of risk management (RM), it provides Customs Officers with risk-based logical and systematic approach to manage compliance. It is a shift in mindset, from policing to partnership. The Customs integration of CM and RM is a concept that was first proposed by Widdowson³, however many states have adopted this strategy with some refinement to suit local context such as FRCS. Essentially, this integrated concept requires that every level of Customs compliance management employ principles of risk management in every decision-making process. It is ultimately an endeavour to achieve a high level of risk maturity in the organisation.

This strategy not only targets non-compliant traders through risk assessment, but also endeavours to detect and lead compliant traders into recognition programs. At FRCS, reward programs include Self-Assessment, FRCS Gold Card program and Authorised Economic Operator program. If a trader falls within the Self-Regulated Category of the Compliance Continuum, then Customs must actively recognise the compliant behaviour by proposing and assisting the trader company into the reward programs.

In this strategy, when errors or discrepancies are identified by FRCS, Customs try to find the root cause of the non-compliance. These root problems may normally fall under one of the below mentioned header:

- Ignorance of the trader or broker of the legislative requirements;
- Confusing legislative drafting;
- There is potential cavity in a particular of law or procedure; or
- Deliberate evasion of duty or regulatory requirements.

Once the root cause of the discrepancies has been identified, Customs can address the root cause as well as the treatment of the identified discrepancies of the particular case. Appropriate remedies for the root causes include, *inter alia*, making all relevant

information regarding Customs processes and procedures readily available to any interested person, such as on the official website⁴; responding quickly and accurately when there is a public query⁵, and providing any additional advice that is considered relevant to the request⁶. At FRCS, we recommend legislative amendments once we identify potential cavity in the legislative framework or processes.

The finding of the root cause of non-compliance and appropriate treatment are to be designed and adopted so that there is no recurrence of the same aspects of non-compliance. On the other hand, using an analogy of the needle in the haystack is appropriate for the circumstance – a needle being a non-compliant trader. Once the amount of haystack is reduced, it is easier to look for the needle. The goal is to reduce the “haystack” of non-compliance so that Customs can focus on the real “needles”. This means, that the promotion of recognition programs for identified self-compliant traders would lead to a more compliant trader base and facilitation of legitimate trade for traders who fall into this category.

This strategy is a doctrinal shift from the enforcement culture where many Customs officers believed in the past that their role was to detect errors. Instead, the role of Customs includes assessment of the degree of compliance with Customs regulatory requirements. This strategy assists Customs management in making decisions regarding future deployment of Customs resources – an integrated risk management and compliance management strategy.

Medicinal Products at a Closer Look

Customs compliance is not just about revenue; it's about health, safety, and security. From counterfeit medicines to illicit drug precursors, the stakes are high. FRCS works closely with agencies like the Medicinal Products Board and international partners to combat these threats. In the Asia-Pacific region, collaboration is key. This involves sharing intelligence, harmonising standards, and leveraging technology to protect communities while enabling trade.

These regulatory compliances would save the state from unnecessary costs in rehabilitation, restoration and other social costs that may be incurred by the citizens and taxpayers of Fiji due to the adverse effects of non-compliance. Moreover, there is also potential for fiscal returns on deliberate non-compliance, whilst protecting the citizens. These areas of Customs compliance are discussed in brief below.

One of the areas that we are focusing on is Medicinal Products. Customs are also responsible for detecting illicit trade of counterfeit pharmaceutical and medical products at border. Counterfeit pharmaceutical products pose a life-threatening hazard to humans. A patient who is severely ill may likely consume products with no active pharmaceutical ingredient without recognising that the medicament is counterfeit. A WHO study reports that almost half (48.7%) of reported cases of counterfeit medicines are reported in developing countries⁷. This misfortune may be happening in the pacific region with the influx of counterfeit pharmaceutical goods.

The OECD Economic Impact study notes that about 8% of the world trade is counterfeit products⁸. The adverse effects of counterfeit goods have social costs to the citizens as well as for the government with importation of inferior quality counterfeit motor vehicle parts, health and safety products, technology products and luxury goods. Customs works with other agencies such as the Medicinal Products Board to address these possible illicit cross-border movements of counterfeit medicinal products.

Moreover, the illicit drug trade, particularly the production and distribution of methamphetamine, represents a significant challenge to national

security and public health. Methamphetamine is a highly addictive and destructive drug that has devastated communities around the world. One of the key ingredients in the production of meth is pseudoephedrine, a substance commonly found in over-the-counter cold medications. This makes medicinal products that contain pseudoephedrine a prime target for criminal organizations seeking to produce methamphetamine.

The national fight against illicit drugs has been a priority for law enforcement agencies in Fiji, and FRCS plays a critical role in this battle. Without strict controls and adherence to import and export procedures, drug precursors can easily be diverted into the hands of criminal organizations.

Conclusion

In a nutshell, this Customs compliance management strategy focuses on a doctrinal shift to managing both compliance and non-compliance, integrating principles of risk management. It is based on a premise that Customs are responsible for overall compliance with the regulatory framework of traders and brokers. The key to achieving this is by treating detections of compliance behaviour of traders with reward programs and non-compliance with appropriate treatment of non-compliance proportional to the circumstances of the case. The ultimate outcome of employing such a strategy is higher organisational risk maturity.

Customs in a VUCA world must be agile, collaborative, and forward-thinking. By integrating risk and compliance strategies, rewarding trust, and addressing root causes, we can create an environment where legitimate trade thrives and illicit trade finds no room to hide.

1. VUCA – a term coined by Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus in their book “Leaders, The Strategies for Taking Charge” Harper & Row Publishing, United Kingdom, 1986.
2. WCO Risk Management Compendium, Revised Kyoto Convention on Simplification of Customs Procedures, and WCO Revenue Package provide a comprehensive guide on the principles of risk management.
3. David Widdowson “Managing customs risk and compliance: an integrated approach” World Customs Journal Vol. 14, No. 2, Sep 2020.
4. Standard 9.1, WCO Revised Kyoto Convention on Simplification of Customs Procedures
5. Standard 9.4, Ibid
6. Standard 9.5, Ibid
7. World Health Organization General information on counterfeit medications at <www.who.int/medicines/services>
8. Hema Vithlani “OECD Economic Impact of Counterfeiting” OECD’s Directorate for Science, Technology and Industry, 2008

Catalyzing Regional Collaborations for Enhanced Synergy in Illicit Cigarette Enforcement

The global threat of transnational illicit cigarette trafficking continues to escalate. Given Hong Kong's status as a premier logistics and maritime hub, there is a growing risk of criminal gangs leveraging its strategic location and excellent connectivity to smuggle cigarettes within the Asia-Pacific region. Despite this challenge, the Hong Kong Customs remains steadfast in taking proactive and intelligence-led enforcement actions with other customs administrations in the region. By enhancing intelligence sharing and spearheading joint operations, Hong Kong Customs plays a pivotal role in tackling the cross-boundary illicit tobacco trade in a multiagency and coordinated approach and manifests its leadership by organizing a series of regional conferences and capacity building workshops as well as inspires regional members to unite in action for all customs operational priorities including revenue protection.

More Effective Collaborations Drove Better Enforcement Outcomes

In November 2024, Hong Kong Customs co-hosted the Regional Conference on Combating Illicit Cigarettes with the Australian Border Force (ABF), bringing together enforcement leaders and experts in Hong Kong to discuss emerging risks and develop concerted strategies. With stronger ties established with regional counterparts since then, a notable enforcement result was hence achieved in the first half of 2025 with seizures of 278 million illicit cigarettes valued at HKD\$1.25 billion uncovered among 84 significant cigarette smuggling cases. Such an encouraging enforcement result is a testament to effective

enforcement collaborations with various customs administrations in response to the evolving smuggling trends as detailed in the ensuing paragraphs.

Cooperation with Singapore Customs

In the face of high penetration of contraband cigarettes from underground tobacco factories in Southeast Asian countries to other places transiting through Singapore, Hong Kong Customs works closely with the Singapore Customs to monitor high-risk shipments for interception at source. Between March and July 2025, 107 million illicit cigarettes were seized from 33 seaborne containers consecutively, giving a severe blow to a major cigarette smuggling ring which took advantage of high cargo throughputs and extensive shipping networks at these two world-class maritime shipping centres to disguise its smuggling intent.



In August 2025, Hong Kong Customs held a press conference to highlight the fruitful results of the joint operation with Singapore Customs, codenamed "Cutflow."

Joint Operation with Anti-Smuggling Bureau (ASB) of China Customs

Cigarette smuggling by small vessels is another prevailing modus operandi warranting enforcement attention. In early 2025, for addressing the offshore transfer from motherships to fishing vessels and speedboats loitering outside the Hong Kong waters, Hong Kong Customs with the support from the ASB conducted joint radar surveillance operations to keep track of suspected cross-loading activities at sea and monitor the movement of suspicious vessels approaching the domestic coast. During the operations, four fishing vessels hiding 49 million illicit cigarettes inside were intercepted, let alone the substantial seizures of illicit cigarettes which were imported illegally by speedboats.



Fishing vessels with substantial seizures of illicit cigarettes were intercepted during the operation with Anti-Smuggling Bureau of China Customs.

Collaboration with Japan Customs

Using the “ant-moving-home” tactic, where air passengers are recruited to bring duty-not-paid branded cigarettes from Japan into Hong Kong, has become more alarming than ever. Indebted to timely dissemination of intelligence from the Japan Customs, coupled with self-initiated detections, a total of 66 passengers were caught red-handed with around 2.25 million numbers of undeclared tobacco products at the Hong Kong International Airport in the first nine months of 2025.



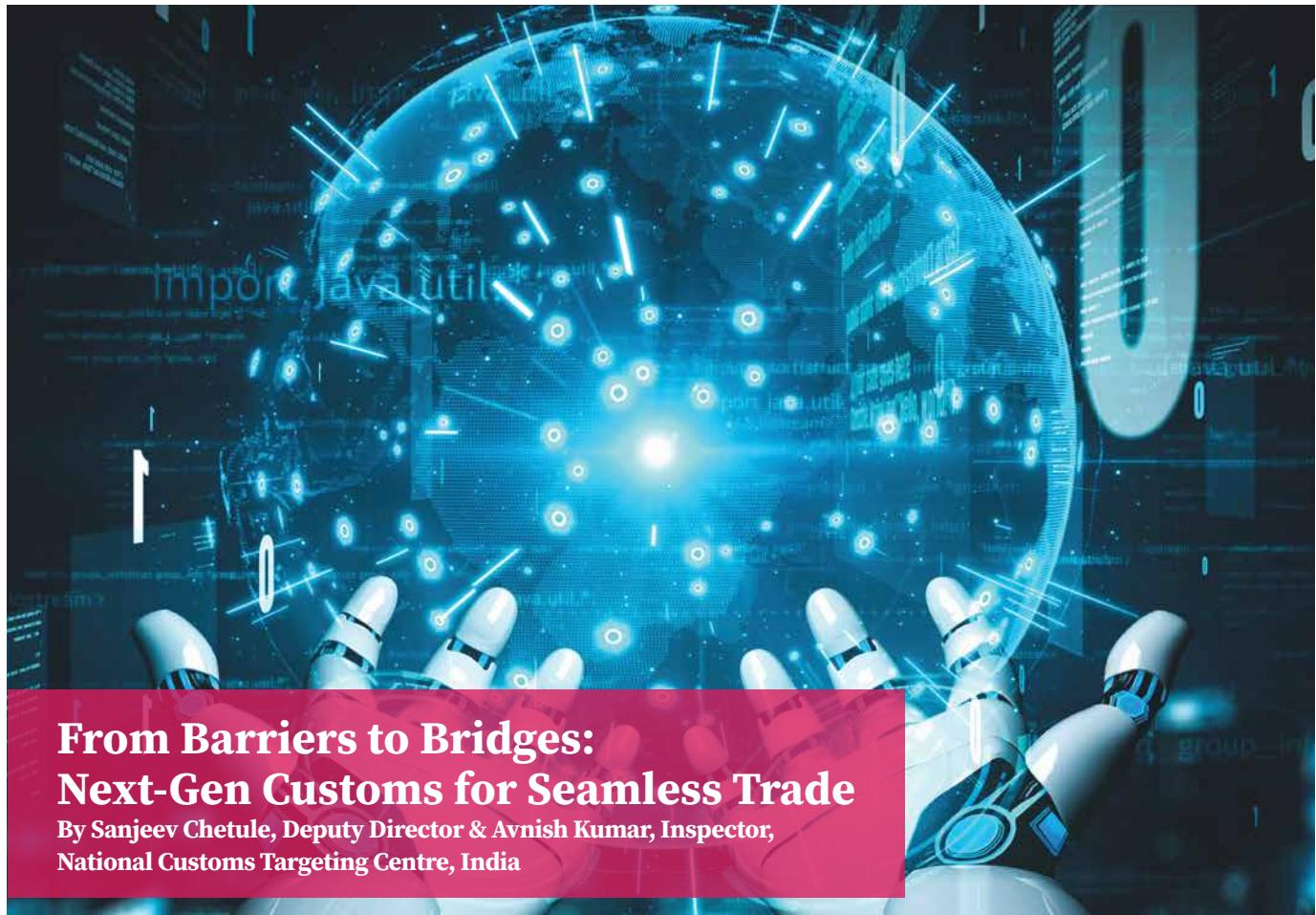
On 25 July 2024, Hong Kong Customs, with the intelligence support from the Japan Customs, seized 42,600 sticks of undeclared cigarettes from an incoming air passenger who was subsequently sentenced to six months' imprisonment.

Coordination with Australian Border Force

To guard against cigarette smugglers using circuitous or “merry-go-round” routing to move cigarettes through multiple ports, Hong Kong Customs is also alert to Australia-bound sea shipments without being en route to Hong Kong. After intelligence scrutiny and risk assessment, information about smuggling-prone shipments were passed to the ABF for interception, resulting in the detection of 22 cases with 115 million sticks of illicit cigarettes seized in Australia.

A Pillar of Regional Solidarity

Looking ahead, Hong Kong Customs will stay committed to upholding its leadership role in countering illegal cigarette trade on all fronts by catalyzing the collaborations among regional customs administrations. Only by joining forces can we stay firmly one step ahead of the smugglers and effectively disrupt and dismantle criminal syndicates in the fight against transnationally organized activities of illicit cigarettes.



From Barriers to Bridges: Next-Gen Customs for Seamless Trade

By Sanjeev Chetule, Deputy Director & Avnish Kumar, Inspector,
National Customs Targeting Centre, India

Exploring how advanced technologies like AI, Blockchain, IoT, Robotics, and other cutting-edge technologies can redefine customs, turning borders into smart, efficient, and secure gateways for Global Trade.

In today's interconnected world, global trade is the engine of economic growth. However, it continues to face hurdles from complex customs processes and outdated regulations. These "barriers" slow down supply chains, and add unnecessary costs for all stakeholders. The opportunity ahead is to transform these impediments into "bridges" to create a trade ecosystem where trade flows are swift, predictable and efficient by making customs "facilitation-driven, technology-enabled and growth-oriented".

Challenges in Customs Administrations

- Rising trade volumes due to containerized shipping and a boom in cross-border e-commerce
- Differing regulations across borders cause delays and inefficiencies
- Illicit trade risks such as smuggling, misdeclaration and invoice manipulation
- Manual Paper-based systems in some economies
- Skills and technology gaps

Strategies and Best Practices

- India's ICEGATE/Turant Customs have simplified documentation
- India's state of the art Risk Management System (RMS) and AI-based profiling in Australia and Japan ensure balance between enforcement and facilitation.
- India's Faceless Assessment system has significantly cut down human interference.
- ASEAN's Single Window Interface have enabled real-time data exchange between customs of member countries.

Next-Gen Technologies Transforming Customs

AI & Data Analytics

AI helps in predictive risk assessment and smarter targeting.

- AI-based risk-profiling, invoice anomaly detection and spurt analysis using ML
- Automated HS code classification using NLP by checking product descriptions and invoices
- AI-assisted non-intrusive inspection technique
- International Trade Data Mining using Neural Networks to detect suspicious trade declarations globally like WCO's BACUDA Project

Blockchain & Distributed Ledger

Blockchain enhances transparency.

- Blockchain-based certificates of origin, and other relevant credentials to prevent forgery
- Trader reputation ledgers can allow traders to be tracked across borders
- Storing trade documents digitally on blockchain, reduces fraud and minimizes delays
- Blockchain-based shipment management system like IBM & Maersk's TradeLens

IoT & Smart Cargo

IoT enables real-time visibility.

- GPS-enabled smart e-seals
- Satellite IoT cargo monitoring to detect suspicious tampering and unusual movements
- Geo-fenced bonded corridors and warehouses
- 5G-connected containers transmit live data on location, temperature, pressure, and CO2 levels-critical for pharmaceuticals & perishable cargo

Robotics & Automation

Automation reduces delays and human error.

- Robotic Process Automation (RPA) automates repetitive tasks like drawback claims etc
- Automated robotic scanners integrated with AI
- Driverless Automated Guided Vehicles (AGVs) move containers inside ports
- Robotic Dogs patrol warehouses and swarm Drones or scanning large container yards
- Parcel Sorting automation or e-Commerce

Digital Identity & Trust

Seamless movement depends on trust.

- Cross-border AEO recognition by Digital IDs
- Biometric e-KYC for importers/exporters
- AI-based "trader reputation scores" similar to credit ratings
- Customs-centric mobile applications

Futuristic and Experimental Tools

- Quantum computing for uncovering hidden smuggling networks
- Zero-Knowledge Proofs allow verification without revealing sensitive data
- DNA tagging and nano-sensor packaging for pharmaceuticals and luxury goods to prevent counterfeiting and tampering
- VR/AR training for officers to prepare for high-risk scenarios
- AI crawlers scan e-commerce and social media to detect illicit trade

Collaborative efforts

- Chatbots for traders to guide them in real-time for filing & compliance
- Frequent interaction with all stakeholders
- Single window system for traders
- E-Sanchit (e-Storage and Computerized Handling of Indirect Tax documents) for seamless uploading and management of documents

The Road Ahead and Conclusion

The future is not just about managing trade, it's about actively enabling it. By embracing integration, intelligence, and collaboration, we can create a seamless, borderless digital ecosystem where trade flows effortlessly. This transformation would have to be a fundamental shift in mindset and not just a technological upgrade, thereby enabling customs to become a strategic enabler of economic growth. A secure, swift, and efficient trade environment is an achievable goal, opening the door to a new era of global trade.

The Pivotal Role of Customs in Global Trade Facilitation

By Jeewan Lal, Assistant Collector, CoC Enforcement, Karachi

In an increasingly interconnected global economy, customs administrations serve as the linchpin of international trade. From regulation of movement of goods across borders to enforcement and maintenance of laws and security at economic frontiers, customs not only safeguard national interests but also play a pivotal role in promoting trade facilitation, enforcing compliance, ensuring efficiency, transparency, and predictability in global supply chains. With the Asia-Pacific (A/P) region being home to some of the fastest-growing economies and trade corridors, having approximate 70% share in global GDP with generation of 50.2% revenue from taxation. Customs agencies must strike a balance between enforcing compliance and fostering trade competitiveness under the umbrella of WCO and WTO. Efforts have been made to examine and explore strategies, challenges, technological innovations, and collaborative efforts that underscore the critical role of customs in global trade facilitation.

Strategies and Best Practices for Enhancing Customs Processes

To enhance trade facilitation, customs administrations are increasingly aligning with the WTO's Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) by simplifying, standardizing, and harmonizing procedures. Risk management systems now replace cumbersome inspections, focusing on high-risk consignments while expediting clearance for trusted traders through profiling. The introduction of Authorized Economic Operator (AEO) programs grants accredited traders benefits such as reduced examinations, laboratory testing, and priority processing, strengthening trust with the private sector while maintaining regulatory oversight. Similarly, single-window systems enable traders to submit documents through a unified platform, minimizing bureaucratic delays and reducing the cost of doing business. Equally important is continuous capacity building and training, ensuring customs officials stay updated on international standards and modern trade practices.

Challenges Faced by Customs Administrations in the A/P Region

Customs administrations in the Asia-Pacific region face significant challenges due to geographic diversity, ranging from vast archipelagos to landlocked states, which complicates trade flows. Infrastructure gaps between advanced economies and developing ones further hinder smooth clearance processes. The rapid rise of e-commerce adds pressure, with millions of low-value parcels daily straining capacity, raising revenue leakage risks, and security concerns. Additionally, balancing facilitation with compliance remains difficult, as the inconsistent application of environmental, health, and safety regulations across economies leads to costly delays and inefficiencies.



Innovative Technologies and Tools for Efficiency

Technological innovation has transformed customs through AI and machine learning for predictive risk assessment, while blockchain ensures secure, transparent documentation and reduces fraud. Electronic data interchange (EDI) enables real-time information sharing among traders, agents, and agencies, expediting clearance. Non-intrusive tools like X-ray scanners enhance security with speed. The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated the adoption of paperless, contactless processes — e-payments, remote inspections, and digital signatures — now becoming permanent features of global trade facilitation.

Collaborative Efforts Between Customs and Stakeholders

Collaboration is central to effective customs facilitation, with regional blocs like APEC, SAARC, ASEAN, and RCEP — under WCO guidance — promoting harmonized practices, tariff rationalization, and capacity building. Customs-to-business partnerships through dialogue with chambers, freight forwarders, and logistics firms help align policies with trade needs while ensuring compliance. The mutual recognition of AEO programs across borders enhances trusted trader benefits. Additionally, bilateral and multilateral agreements support information sharing to combat illicit trade, reduce duplication, streamline clearance, and reinforce global supply chain resilience.

The leading role of Pakistan Customs in Global Trade Facilitation

Pakistan Customs has undergone an exemplary transformation through the digitalization of its clearance processes and procedures, ranging from the automation of Goods Declarations to the introduction of Faceless Assessment initiatives, which have enhanced efficiency, transparency, and global recognition. The establishment of Digital Enforcement Stations and stronger enforcement against illicit trade and smuggling has created a fair environment for legitimate trade, while the launch of Central Assessment and Examination Units at seaports has reduced dwell time from 108 to 66 hours, bringing Pakistan closer to global benchmarks such as Singapore and Japan. The integration of regulatory agencies via the Pakistan Single Window (PSW) and the linkage of Terminal Operators, Shipping Lines, and Freight Forwarders through the Port Community System have ensured safer cargo handling and faster clearances. Additionally, the adoption of Blue Channel and Pre-arrival Clearance mechanisms is accelerating trade facilitation, positioning Pakistan as a potential transit hub for landlocked Central Asian states. As a signatory to the WCO and WTO, Pakistan has also significantly reduced tariff and non-tariff barriers, maintaining a careful balance between trade facilitation and compliance with international standards.



Customs in the Digital Realm: Are We Vigilant Enough?

By Apichana Luichan, Customs Inspector, Enforcement Division, Thai Customs Department

Digitalisation may represent hope for many, for Customs it poses pressing challenges. Customs administration is among agencies who are thriving to enjoy the fruit of the digital advancements after that have long been harvested by the private sectors. With its virtual existence core, the digital products - precisely, digitally delivered products - are reachable to all classes from global to local. Being delivered from its origin in the advanced economies, inconspicuously it does show no regard for the borders under our watching.

Asia Pacific has seen rapid growth in digital deliverable market alongside the South-East Asian sub-region. However, the lack of skills, talent, innovation, entrepreneurship and regulatory policies, countries face unequal opportunities. The recent decision at the WTO Ministerial Conference in Abu Dhabi in early 2024 to extend the Moratorium on Customs Duties for Electronic Transmissions by two years underscores the long debate on how such digital products should be treated. While the technology-led producing countries aim to narrow the digital divide, the emerging economies seek the moratorium's permanent termination due to substantial losses for the duty-free digital imports.

Later in the same year, Thailand introduced the e-service tax scheme, recommended by the OECD, wishing to create fairness and equality in taxation between foreign and domestic providers while compensating for revenue loss from imports. The country expected to collect an estimated 150 million USD annually, and within the first quarter it proved successful. This may appear to be an appropriate measure for a country to implement but it also shakes the very foundation of Customs' role as a guardian of borders.

By their nature, digitally delivered products are difficult to address and pose complex regulatory

challenges. They are intangible, and with just a single click they are being delivered to consumers. Monitoring them is arguably an impossible mission, especially for a small nation. Meanwhile, the WCO notes that such products are not considered as goods in the HS which only applies to the physical goods that move across border. In parallel, there is a notable debate on whether digitally delivered products should be regarded as goods or services, as they exhibit characteristics of both. For instance, an e-book or digital film carries product-like attributes such as ownership, returnability, perishability, quality assessment, and timing of consumption, while their intangible nature aligns them with services. Similarly, 3D printing is another classic example, raising questions about product value whether it lies in physical machine itself or in the digital operational commands that drive it.

Will the same product, when presented in different storage forms, be subject to different tariff treatments? In doing so, is the product's essential value being overlooked simply because it is intangible? And will the cross-border digital threats be ignored because they are not easily traceable? This irony raises fundamental concerns in many dimensions of the Customs ecosystem.

The ongoing WTO moratorium renewed every two years like a rug concealing unresolved mess, together with the e-service tax, appears to be little more than temporary cleaning tool feasible at present. But what if WTO members agree to abolish the moratorium, whether as soon as March 2026 or later? What course of action will Customs take? Are we vigilant enough? Do we need to redefine our roles and philosophy? Ultimately, how can we reconcile a mandate to promote borderless trade, when we find ourselves unable to manage borderless products arriving at our doors?

REGIONAL UPDATES



Asia/Pacific Customs News #76

Full Launch of Air-Land Fresh Lane



The "Air-Land Fresh Lane" is a new trade facilitation measure introduced by the Hong Kong Customs to facilitate the transhipment of fresh products between the Chinese Mainland and the overseas market via Hong Kong International Airport and the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge. It has come into full operation following a trial period since April 2025.

Building a fresh food industry chain in the Western Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area

Leveraging the strengths of the Hong Kong International Airport (HKIA) and Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (the Bridge), the Governments of Guangdong and Hong Kong have jointly launched the "Air-Land Fresh Lane" (Fresh Lane) initiative which adopts new regulatory measures by applying the e-lock cum global positioning system (GPS) equipment to streamline customs clearance for fresh products, ensuring a secure and seamless flow of transhipment.

The Fresh Lane facilitates the transhipment of overseas fresh products to the Chinese Mainland through the Bridge upon their flight arrival in Hong Kong, and empowers high-quality fresh products from the Greater Bay Area (GBA) to overseas market.

Key advantages of the Fresh Lane include streamlined clearance of fresh food transhipments,

enabling customs clearance to be complete in Zhuhai within three hours after arrival at HKIA, resulting in significant time savings. The use of e-locks combined with GPS equipment reduces the likelihood of repeated inspections within the territory. With the support of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, the food importer registration requirement is exempted under this scheme, further expediting the transhipment process. Additionally, clearance points are equipped with temperature-controlled facilities to ensure the freshness and quality of perishable goods are preserved throughout the transhipment process.

The Fresh Lane marks a significant milestone in customs cooperation and trade facilitation, creating a robust platform for the development of the GBA's fresh food industry. By improving supply chain efficiency and quality assurance, the Fresh Lane supports import and export activities and stimulates growth in related sectors such as cold-chain logistics, food processing, and agricultural innovation.

This new initiative has not only successfully established the bridge as a "green channel" for fresh products but also injected new momentum into the logistics development of the GBA. Hong Kong Customs will continue to promote and deepen high-level collaboration with the Mainland Customs across different districts, thereby contributing to the developments of the GBA and the country.

Nearly 200 guests attended the ceremony, who represented various bodies including the Gongbei Customs, the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the HKSAR and Zhuhai Municipal Bureau of Commerce, the HKSAR Government bureaux and departments, the Legislative Council, the AAHK, foreign consuls, logistics associations and fresh food trade sectors.



Air-Land Fresh Lane Full Launch Ceremony

Photo shows (from left to right) the Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene, Mr Donald Ng; the Deputy Director-General of the Police Liaison Department of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, Ms Meng Xiaoyuan; the Chief Executive Officer of the Airport Authority Hong Kong, Mrs Vivian Cheung; the Commissioner of Customs and Excise, Mr Chan Tsz-tat; Party Committee Member of Gongbei Customs District, Director General of the Zhongshan Customs District, Mr Wang Baoren; and Legislative Council Member (Transport) Mr Frankie Yick, officiated at the ceremony.



Fresh Shipments

Trial runs have been conducted since April to transport products such as Australian tuna and live lobsters, Mexican geoducks, live eels from Bangladesh and Thai clams.

Smart Customs Transforming Global Trade as Growth Enablers

Trade facilitation is the backbone of economic development impacting competitiveness, business efficiency, and societal welfare. It reduces transaction costs, provides affordable access to global markets and allows consumers to benefit from competitively priced goods. National economies become integrated with global value chains and reap benefits from their participation. The World Bank estimates that comprehensive trade facilitation reforms can boost global GDP by over \$1 trillion annually, demonstrating its profound economic significance.

Beyond economic metrics, trade facilitation creates employment opportunities, technology transfer and meaningful access to global commerce. Trade facilitation creates a virtuous cycle of global prosperity by making supply chains resilient, accelerating innovation and strengthening partnerships.

Customs: The Gateway to Global Commerce

Modern customs administrations have evolved from traditional revenue collectors to strategic trade facilitators. Today's customs processes leverage sophisticated risk management systems, digital platforms, and international cooperation frameworks to balance security with efficiency. Key facilitation mechanisms include risk-based selection and single-window systems that eliminate multiple agency interactions.

Advanced technologies such as Electronic Data Interchange (EDI), automated risk profiling, and

digital documentation have revolutionized customs operations. These innovations enable predictable processing times, transparent procedures, and consistent application of regulations across different locations. Partnership programs with trusted traders further enhance facilitation by providing preferential treatment to compliant businesses while maintaining security standards.

India's Digital Customs Transformation

Indian Customs has pioneered comprehensive modernization initiatives that exemplify global best practices. The Indian Customs Electronic Gateway (ICEGATE) provides centralized electronic filing for all customs documents, eliminating paper-based processes and creating unprecedented transparency.

The Single Window Interface for Facilitating Trade (SWIFT) allows traders to submit clearance documents at one point, automatically coordinating with multiple regulatory agencies, substantially reducing transaction times. The Risk Management System (RMS) enables over 80-95% of shipments to clear without physical inspection through intelligent profiling of importers, exporters, and commodities.

The Authorized Economic Operator (AEO) program has grown to nearly 5,000 certified entities, creating partnerships with compliant traders who receive expedited processing benefits. Furthermore, Indian Customs has signed mutual-recognition agreements (MRAs) with a host of partner countries like, Singapore, Australia, etc. and many others are in the pipeline.

Updates on Customs Enforcement Against Transnational Crime in Samoa

By Samoa Customs Service

Transnational organized crime poses an ever-evolving threat to border security and regional stability across the Pacific. As illicit networks exploit increasing trade and travel, customs administrations must remain vigilant and adaptive. The Samoa Customs Service is rising to this challenge, reinforcing its enforcement capabilities through capacity building, technological advancement, strategic partnerships, and regional and national cooperation.

New Container X-Ray Scanner and Customs Examination Facility (CEF)

A landmark development for Samoa's border security was the commissioning of the country's first Container X-Ray Scanner in July 2024. Installed at the Matautu Wharf as part of the ADB-funded Port Enhancement Project, the scanner marks a critical step in modernizing Samoa's cargo inspection process. The non-intrusive technology enables quicker and more efficient targeting and inspection of high-risk consignments, enhancing detection while facilitating legitimate trade.

Complementing this advancement is the newly established Customs Examination Facility (CEF), designed to support controlled and secure physical inspections. Together, these innovations allow Samoa Customs to systematically verify container contents and identify concealment methods used by smugglers attempting to traffic drugs, firearms, and other contraband.

Recent interdictions at the border have highlighted the value of these new developments, with successful seizures of methamphetamine, cannabis, paraphernalia and detection of several tax evasion attempts.



Customs staff demonstrating the use of the ionscan machine donated by the Australian Border Force

Joint Customs and Police K9 Unit

Samoa Customs and the Samoa Police Service remain committed to strengthening the Detector Dog Unit (K9), recognizing it as a vital asset in combating narcotics trafficking at the border and supporting domestic enforcement operations. With the support of the New Zealand Pacific Detector Dog Program (PDDP), Samoa's detector dog capability has seen significant enhancement. Restructuring, training, equipment, and advisory support from PDDP have empowered the K9 team to detect illicit substances across key entry points, airports, wharf, post office and courier services, and Customs Controlled Areas (CCAs).

The upcoming Pacific Detector Dog Program (PDDP) Steering Committee Meeting in Nadi, Fiji, reaffirms the region's commitment to canine-led enforcement. Samoa Customs will actively participate in the meeting, contributing to regional dialogue on operational challenges, best practices, and future training and assistance. The event will also host a K9 joint training session, a vital opportunity for K9 Coordinators and handlers to sharpen detection skills and standardize procedures across the Pacific.

Regional Partnerships

Samoa's strategic partnerships with the New Zealand Customs Service (NZCS) and the Australian Border Force (ABF) remain pivotal in the national response to transnational crime. In the past year, Samoa Customs has benefited from multiple capacity-building initiatives, including the provision of two cabinet x-ray machines for the airport and post office, Rad Eye Personal Radiation Detectors, Protective and Safety Gear, NIK (Narcotic Identification Kit) Testers, Mini-Rae devices for chemical detection, new handheld radios for field operations, and official uniforms amongst other things.

Samoa Customs and New Zealand Customs are currently implementing a formal five-year work plan, which recently included the development of a Cooperative Agreement aimed at streamlining and facilitating the exchange of information and intelligence, while a similar formal work plan with the Australian Border Force is currently in draft.



The New Zealand High Commissioner to Samoa, Chief Executive Officer – Ministry of Customs and Revenue Samoa and the Pacific Liaison for New Zealand Customs during the hand-over ceremony of donated equipment and uniforms for Samoa Customs Services



The Deputy Prime Minister of Samoa and the Minister of Customs and Revenue received donated equipment from the Australian Border Force

In addition, Samoa Customs' role in the PDDP Steering Committee allows for greater input into the direction of regional enforcement efforts, ensuring Samoa's operational needs are reflected in programmatic decisions.

Coordinated National Response

Efforts to combat transnational crime also hinge on effective collaboration with domestic law enforcement partners. The Samoa Customs as a core member of the National Security Committee, continues to work closely with the Samoa Police, the transnational crime unit, the financial intelligence unit and other national agencies to share intelligence and conduct joint operations targeting narcotics, firearms and ammunition, money laundering, terrorism related activities, and etc.

Way Forward

As Samoa faces increased trade and travel, customs enforcement must evolve in parallel. The establishment of new enforcement positions, the deployment of advanced detection tools, and regional and local cooperation are integral to building a resilient border. Samoa Customs remains committed to strengthening its capabilities and contributing to a united Pacific and national front against transnational crime.

CustomsAi: Sri Lanka's First AI Tool for Revenue Forecasting

Sri Lanka Customs has launched its first-ever artificial intelligence tool, developed with WCO BACUDA expertise, achieving 93.6% forecasting accuracy to support fiscal planning and innovation.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is reshaping public institutions worldwide, and Sri Lanka Customs has marked a milestone by launching CustomsAi, the Department's first-ever AI-powered system. Designed entirely in-house, CustomsAi applies advanced machine learning to customs revenue data, setting a new benchmark for innovation in the Asia/Pacific region.

The initiative was spearheaded by the ICT Division under the leadership of Mr. Athri Sasanka Liyanaarachchi, Superintendent of Customs (ICT), WCO BACUDA Data-Analytics Scholar, and National Contact Point for the WCO Smart Customs Project. Leveraging expertise gained through the WCO Korea Customs Service BACUDA Programme, the team addressed a long-standing challenge: accurate and timely revenue forecasting in a highly dynamic trade environment.

CustomsAi was trained on three years of daily revenue collection data and produced remarkable

results – 93.6% accuracy, a MAPE of 6.66% and an R^2 value of 0.9671. These results confirm the robustness of the model and its value as a decision-support tool for Customs leadership and policymakers.

By enabling highly reliable projections, CustomsAi enhances coordination with the Ministry of Finance and strengthens transparency in fiscal management. The project also illustrates the importance of developing in-house expertise and harnessing international capacity-building initiatives such as BACUDA, ensuring sustainable cost-effective innovation.

CustomsAi was presented at the WCO Smart Customs Workshop on Disruptive Technologies (Jakarta, 2024) as a pioneering regional case study. It exemplifies the WCO's vision of adopting disruptive technologies to modernize customs administrations and demonstrates that developing countries, with the right expertise, can lead impactful innovation.

As the first-ever AI project in Sri Lanka Customs, CustomsAi is not just a technical achievement – it is a milestone in the Department's journey toward smart, data-driven operations and a model for future regional innovations.



CAPACITY ENHANCEMENT



Asia/Pacific Customs News #76

Capacity Building on Customs Valuation and AEO Program

By the Customs Standard Procedures and Valuation Division, Thai Customs Department

The Thai Customs Department continues to prioritize capacity building initiatives aimed at strengthening the knowledge and skills of customs officers nationwide through a series of targeted workshops and training programs. Recent activities, organized by the Customs Standard Procedures and Valuation Division, include regional training on customs valuation, specialized workshop on the deductive value method and the internal Knowledge Management (KM) Workshop on Authorized Economic Operator (AEO) Program.

Customs Valuation Roadshow

The “Customs Valuation Roadshow” regional training program signifies the outreach efforts of the Thai Customs Department to strengthen the capacity of frontline officers in implementing the accurate customs valuation method, in alignment with the international standards. The program also served as a platform for customs officers to exchange their experiences and challenges encountered at their respective customs houses,

fostering a common understanding and providing valuable insights for the continued improvement of customs valuation procedures to ensure greater appropriateness and efficiency.

The latest trainings were organized for officers from both the southern and northern regions, held at Hatyai Airport Customs House, Songkhla Province from 19–21 March 2025 and at Chiangsaen Customs House, Chiang Rai Province from 25–27 May 2025 respectively, engaging over 100 participants.



Participants of the Customs Valuation Roadshow, held from 19–21 March 2025 at the Hatyai Airport Customs House



Ms. Suntareeya Twichaprasit, Director of the Customs Standard Procedures and Valuation Division, delivered the opening remarks highlighting the importance of the accurate implementation of Customs Valuation Method



Experts from the Customs Standard Procedures and Valuation Division

Workshops on Customs Valuation by 'Deductive Value Method'

The workshops on Customs Valuation by Deductive Value Method (Method 4) took place on 8 - 9 September 2025 at Customs Academy in Bangkok, drawing over 100 officers from various fields. The workshop offered in-depth instruction on the circumstances under which the deductive value method would come into play—particularly when the transaction value method cannot be used and time constraints prevent reliance on the transaction value of identical or similar goods.

Through a combination of comprehensive lectures and practical case studies, the workshop deepened the participants' understanding in the complexities of valuation methods, enhancing capabilities and consistency in their daily operations.

Knowledge Management Workshop on the AEO Program

The knowledge management workshop on the AEO Program was organized with the aim of enhancing awareness among customs officers of the significance of AEO status accredited to the operators who uphold security standards throughout the supply chain. The workshop was

held specifically for the officers within the Customs Standard Procedures and Valuation Division at the Customs Department in Bangkok on July 31, 2025.

Featuring interactive activities, including case-based exercises, the workshop was designed to guide participants to better understand the eligibility criteria and security requirements outlined in the WCO's SAFE Framework of Standards. This workshop also provided an update on the progress of the AEO Program, highlighting the benefits and facilitation measures that AEOs are entitled to enjoy. Such capacity-building efforts ensure that the relevant officers remain up to date and unified.

These three initiatives, ranging from the regional training program and intensive workshop to the departmental knowledge management program, reinforce the Thai Customs Department's continued commitment to enhancing the competencies of its customs officers in promoting trade facilitation and transparency, while ensuring the supply chain in line with international standards.



Expert from the Customs Standard Procedures and Valuation Division delivering a comprehensive course on Deductive Value Method Procedures and Valuation Division

A close-up, slightly blurred photograph of several people's hands and forearms, all of whom are giving a thumbs-up gesture. The hands belong to different ethnicities and are dressed in various styles of clothing, including a grey shirt, a dark suit jacket, and a pink sleeve. The background is out of focus, showing more of the diverse crowd.

CUSTOMS APPRECIATION

Asia/Pacific Customs News #76

Hong Kong, China

KWOK Chi-ching Inspector



Mr. KWOK, serves as an Inspector with the Hong Kong Customs, has demonstrated exemplary leadership and expertise in the field of digital forensics. In July 2025, Mr. KWOK guided his team to secure the championship title at the 2nd International Digital Forensics Challenge. This remarkable achievement underscores Hong Kong Customs' advanced capabilities in digital forensic examination and sets a new standard for investigative excellence within the global customs community.

Key Achievements:

Outstanding Performance in Global Competition

Mr. KWOK and his team excelled against 21 international expert teams, showcasing Hong Kong Customs' cutting-edge digital forensic methodologies and analytical precision. Their success not only highlights the Department's commitment to innovation and professionalism but also reinforces Hong Kong's leading position in the international digital forensics arena.

Enhancing Regional and International Collaboration

Throughout the competition, Mr. KWOK actively engaged in professional exchanges with experts from law enforcement agencies, the private sector, and academia worldwide. These interactions contributed to the advancement of global digital forensic standards and fostered stronger cooperation among international customs authorities.

A Testament to Hong Kong Customs' Excellence

Mr. KWOK's achievement is a source of immense pride for Hong Kong Customs and reflects the Department's unwavering dedication to excellence in law enforcement. His leadership and the team's success serve as an inspiration for continued innovation and professionalism within the international customs community.

The Hong Kong Customs remains committed to protecting Hong Kong from smuggling, safeguarding intellectual property rights, and ensuring the integrity of trade. Mr. KWOK's accomplishment further solidifies Hong Kong's reputation as a global leader in customs enforcement and digital forensics.

Thailand

Eakvut Naeak

Director of Bangkok Port Customs Office



Key Achievements:

Mr. Eakvut Naeak, Director of the Bangkok Port Customs Office, has elevated law enforcement efficiency through inter-agency cooperation—overcoming limitations in tools, personnel, and budget. Through strategic cooperation with domestic and international partners, he has fostered trust, improved intelligence sharing, and achieved impactful results—including major seizures of heroin, methamphetamine, e-waste and other illicit goods. His focus on clear operational goals, knowledge-sharing, and coordinated networks has enhanced border control and sustained long-term cooperation. These accomplishments not only safeguard society and uphold trade integrity but also elevate the global standing of the Thai Customs Department.

Sri Lanka

Athri Sasanka Liyanaarachchi

Superintendent of Customs (ICT)



Key Achievements:

Mr. Liyanaarachchi, a WCO BACUDA Scholar and National Contact Point for the WCO Smart Customs Project, led the development of CustomsAI, Sri Lanka Customs' first-ever AI initiative. The tool applies advanced machine learning to revenue data and achieved 93.6% accuracy in forecasting, significantly strengthening fiscal planning. His work was showcased at the WCO Smart Customs Workshop (Jakarta, 2024) as a pioneering regional innovation.



RECENT AND UPCOMING WCO EVENTS

September 2025	A Collective Response to Safeguarding Maritime Supply Chains from Criminal Threats	Brussels, Belgium 10 - 11 September 2025
October 2025	35 th WCO Asia/Pacific Regional Contact Points Meeting	Hong Kong, China 13 - 17 October 2025
November 2025	3 rd Symposium on “Removing Counterfeits from E-commerce”	Brussels, Belgium 25 November 2025
December 2025	93 rd Session of the Policy Commission	Antigua, Guatemala 2 - 4 December 2025
January 2026	2026 WCO Technology Conference	Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates 28 - 30 January 2026
February 2026	WCO Global Forum on Origin Self-Certification	Brussels, Belgium 12 - 13 February 2026
	20 th Meeting of the Audit Committee	Brussels, Belgium 16 - 17 February 2026
March 2026	Regional Conference on Smart Customs	Hong Kong, China 11 - 13 March 2026



ASIA/PACIFIC VOLUME
CUSTOMS NEWS #76

**The Pivotal Role of Customs in
Global Trade Facilitation**

