

Profile of Indian Trade Service



Overview of Indian Trade Service

The Indian Trade Service (ITS) was formed in 1977 and the direct recruitment through UPSC started in 1985. It is an Organized Group 'A' Central Service. The first batch of ITS joined in 1986. Department Of Commerce is the Cadre Controlling Authority for the Indian Trade Service, and the day-to-day management of the Cadre has been delegated to the DGFT. Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) is an Attached Office under the Department of Commerce, Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

The sanctioned strength of ITS, as on date, is 191, comprising of 72 posts of Assistant DGFT at JTS level, 44 posts of Deputy DGFT at STS level (inclusive of NFSG), 48 posts of Joint DGFT at JAG level and 26 posts of Additional DGFT at SAG level and 1 post at the HAG level. Cadre Review of the ITS has recently been completed.

An ITS officer starts his career in Group A as Assistant Director General of Foreign Trade. Recruitment at this level is through the Civil Services Examination conducted by Union Public Service Commission. The Indian Trade Service Recruitment Rules regulate the selection and career prospects of an ITS officer. ITS officers play crucial role in promotion of India's foreign trade and thus help in earning foreign exchange which is crucial for the economy. ITS officers act as protector of interests of country's trading community. ITS officers at the same time play a role of a guide and mentor to budding exporters as well as established exporters.

Dynamism on the trade front is reflected in a large way through the positions occupied by ITS officials in Ministry of Commerce and other Trade agencies (WTO, UN ESCAP, Trade Boards etc.). Individual officers are posted in DGFT; SEZs; DGAD; Trade policy division, Trade dispute settlement, Logistics Division and other wings of Department of Commerce and various Ministries.

Role of Indian Trade Service officers

Role in Directorate General of Foreign Trade

The Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT), earlier known as CCI&E, a body created under the Foreign Trade (Development & Regulation) Act (FTDR Act), is the regulator and facilitator of Foreign Trade in India. DGFT is entrusted with the task of formulating and implementing the Foreign Trade Policy of India from time to time to facilitate the growth of India's external trade in goods and services, while making critical inputs required for growth of India's manufacturing and service sectors.

In addition to the above promotional role as a trade facilitator, DGFT organisation also plays the crucial role of the regulator of the FTDR Act and handles the enforcement and adjudication functions under the Foreign Trade Regulations, including investigation and adjudications of violations of the FT (DR) Act and foreign trade related frauds, violation of export obligations under various export promotion schemes. DGFT also handles trade disputes between the Indian and foreign firms arising out of unethical commercial dealings. Main role of the Indian Trade Service in this organisation is to:

- Formulate the export-import policies and implement them.
- Administer various export promotion measures and export incentive schemes.
- Monitoring the exports obligations.
- Tariff Rate Quota allocations.
- Exporter/Entrepreneur hand holding/mentoring under Niryat Bandhu
- Import licensing and regulation thereof,
- Export licensing and regulation thereof,
- Export Quota allocations.
- Administration of GSP and other Certificate of Origin related matters.
- Administration of the Foreign Trade Development and Regulation Act (FTDR Act).
- Investigation, Enforcement and Adjudication functions under the Foreign Trade Regulations.
- Settlement of Quality and other trade disputes.
- Action against violation of export obligations under various export promotion schemes.
- Action against violation of Actual User conditions of Export and Import Quotas/Permissions.
- Trade Facilitation.
- Monitoring of import of Sensitive Items.

Role in Department of Commerce

As the nodal Department in the affairs of India's external trade, the mandate of the Department of Commerce (DOC) is formulation of appropriate policies and implementation thereof for development, promotion and regulation of India's international trade and commerce.

The role is to facilitate creation of enabling environment and infrastructure for accelerated growth of India's trade in goods and services. External trade negotiations and trade agreements at multilateral, regional and bilateral levels are negotiated by the Department. This Department is also the nodal point for interaction with international agencies such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), the United National Conference on Trade & Development (UNCTAD), the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), as well as individual countries or group of countries on a wide range of issues including tariff and non-tariff barriers, international commodity agreements, preferential/ free trade arrangements, and investment matters, etc.

At present posts, up to the Director level, have been kept reserved in the DOC for the Indian Trade Service officers to perform certain key tasks; including formulating the India's negotiating position in the WTO and in several Preferential/ Regional/ Bilateral Trade Agreements. The members of the service also handle some other key areas of the Department such as:

1. Formulating India's negotiating position in the WTO;
2. Formulating India's negotiating position in Preferential / Regional / Bilateral Trade Agreements such as
3. Free Trade Agreements,
4. Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreements;
5. Trade Disputes;
6. Trade Policies;
7. Commodities Divisions;
8. State Trading Enterprises;
9. ASIDE Scheme.

Role in World Trade Organisation (WTO)

The officers of the Indian Trade Service man some of the key positions in the Trade Policy Division of the Department of Commerce which deals with the multilateral trade negotiations at the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Some of the areas within the WTO multilateral system that the capital based officers negotiate are non-agricultural market access (NAMA); rules on trade remedy measures like anti-dumping, countervailing and safeguard; dispute settlement; information technology agreement (ITA); rules of origin; Globalised System of Trade Preferences (GSTP) and government procurement. The work entails the formulation or finalisation of India's negotiating position, conducting stakeholder consultations, extraction of trade data, data analysis, preparation of India's tariff schedule, negotiating during meetings at the WTO and preparation of policy papers or Cabinet notes for the negotiations.

Apart from this, TPD also receives a number of inputs or requests from stakeholders and needs to frame replies to Parliament questions related to WTO negotiations. The officers have also handled the logistics and analysis of negotiating issues related to Mini-Ministerial meetings and the Ministerial meeting of the WTO.

The ITS officers have also been posted in the Permanent Mission of India to the WTO at Geneva. The work handled by the officers in the Mission are related to agriculture, NAMA, ITA, government procurement, GSTP, sanitary and phytosanitary measures (SPS), technical barriers to trade (TBT), import licencing. Some of the other WTO bodies that the officers have handled are the Committee on Market Access (CMA) and the Council for Trade in Goods (CTG).

The nature of the work in the Mission relates to negotiating on international trade issues in the multilateral, plurilateral/ small group and bilateral formats; working through coalitions specifically in key areas of agriculture and NAMA; formulating country positions and negotiating on that basis in the WTO meetings; preparing position papers; making submissions both from the country and coalition perspective; formulating the plan of action both pre and post meetings; data collation and analysis; India's tariff schedule preparation; making presentations in seminars and workshops etc. ITS officers have also been Chairperson of some WTO bodies like the Committee on Market Access (CMA).

Role in Special Economic Zones

The Special Economic Zones (SEZ) in the country, notified under the SEZ Act, 2005, are hubs for economic activities related to foreign trade, with the objectives of generation of additional economic activities, promotion of exports of goods and services, promotion of investment from domestic and foreign sources, and creation of employment opportunities along with the development of infrastructure facilities.

SEZs are administered as per the SEZ Act, 2005 and SEZ Rules, 2006 and each Zone is headed by a Development Commissioner, appointed by the Ministry of Commerce to supervise the operation of the Zone, including giving approval to the units within the zone, liaison with the respective State and Central Government agencies for successful operation of the Zones.

The Development Commissioner is supported by such other officers drawn from different departments, including Customs and Excise, in administration of the Zone. At present 11 posts of Development Commissioners in multi product SEZs are available to the Indian Trade Service officers.

Role in Directorate General of Anti Dumping

The Directorate General of Anti-dumping and Allied Duties (DGAD) was established in 1998 to provide an organizational structure to implement WTO Agreement on Antidumping (ADA) and Agreement on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures (ASCM) and the corresponding municipal laws. Many ITS officers are posted in DGAD from time to time.

The Directorate conducts the anti-dumping and anti-subsidy/countervailing investigations and makes recommendations to the Central Government for imposition of anti-dumping or countervailing measures, where appropriate, to protect the domestic industry from unfair trade practices of the trading partners in the form of dumping and subsidization. The findings/determinations of the Designated Authority / DGAD are appealable in the Customs, Excise & Service Tax Appellate Tribunal (CESTAT) and thereafter in the Supreme Court of India as per the Customs Act. Writ jurisdiction of the High Courts also extends to such actions. DGAD also provides technical support to the Department of commerce in the matters of WTO Rules negotiations, bilateral and multilateral trade negotiations and trade disputes with other Member countries.

The investigation wing of the DGAD is exclusively manned by the members of the Indian Trade Service upto the level of Directors to carry out antidumping and anti-subsidy investigations as investigating officers to investigate the nature and extent of dumping and/or subsidization and to recommend the extent of duty to neutralize the effect of dumping and/or subsidization. Apart from the investigation work the officers also provide expert technical support to the Department of Commerce in the areas of trade negotiations, Rules negotiations

and trade disputes, including defending the trade remedial measures of the other trading partners against India.

Role in other ministries

Besides working in Ministry of Commerce, ITS officers serve various other ministries/departments/Organisations/ in centre and states from time to time. Officers have excelled in ministries like Ministry of Communication and Information Technology, Ministry of Power, Ministry of Home Affairs etc. One post each in Ministry of External Affairs (Deputy Secretary post), Ministry of Textiles (Joint Secretary post) and Ministry of Agriculture (Joint Secretary post) has been reserved for ITS officers.

Training & Capacity Building

Induction Training

The ITS probationers undergo mandatory Foundation-course training at various designated academies in co-ordination with LBSNAA-Mussourie. Indian Trade Service probationers are then trained at prestigious Indian Institute of Foreign Trade, New Delhi. The training is divided into class room teachings and practical training in form of various attachments.

The class room teaching focuses on areas like India's Foreign Trade Policy, World Trade Organisation Framework, International Business Marketing, Macro and Micro Economics, Human Resource Management etc. The probationers also get an opportunity to learn a foreign language during the training. The probationers are attached with various ports, manufacturing units to give an industry exposure. Their skills are further honed during attachment with other government departments and organisations like NACEN, FIEO, Customs and Excise, Foreign Service Institute(FSI, New Delhi) and at other institutes of national importance / PSU's /autonomous establishments and at international institutes / organisations.

Mid Career Training

The mid career training of ITS officers includes training in India as well as in an internationally acclaimed university outside India. The training in India was conducted by Indian Institute of Management (IIM), Ahmedabad for previous batches. The officers were sent to USA, Switzerland etc to complete the foreign component of the training. The officers are sent for short term WTO related training.

Career Prospects at a glance

As per the current Cadre Structure an ITS officer can rise up-to the HAG Scale at the level of Additional Secretary to the Government of India rising through the posts of Under Secretary, Deputy Secretary, and Joint Secretary.

Besides serving within the country, there are potential opportunities available to serve in Commercial consulates in the Indian Missions abroad, WTO, UN bodies like UNCTAD etc. There are other trade related bodies like Export Promotion Councils, Commodity Boards, Trade Advisor/Commissioner in states, FICCI, CII etc., where expertise of ITS officers will be required and creation of new roles in these bodies are expected in future. The role of ITS officers is expected to increase also in the activities to facilitate trade under Make In India and hand holding new generation entrepreneurs to start export businesses under Niryat Bandhu and Start Up India initiative.