

Taxman eyes service depts for complaint redressal

The government is set to unveil taxpayer service verticals for the direct and indirect tax wings to deal with grievances and also work out ways to make the system more consumer friendly and address constant complaints.

On Monday, the Central Board of Excise and Customs (CBEC) is expected to announce its taxpayer services vertical, headed by a director general, along with two other verticals, at a meeting of chief commissioners that will be also be attended by finance minister Arun Jaitley . “The entity will deal with grievances and make sure that services offered to taxpayers, both individuals and companies, improve, “said an officer.

In the coming weeks, the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) will also set up a similar entity within the department.

The revenue department has identified improving taxpayer services as the main focus area in the work programme for the current year. The two steps come after the tax department faced flak for the way it dealt with taxpayers, issuing notices and raising demands, including through retrospective amendments to the law. In recent months, the finance minister has sought to address the concerns, although industry still complains about the tax regime not being adequately friendly.

The establishment of the taxpayer service verticals was recommended by the Tax Administration Reform Commission (TARC) headed by Parthasarathi Shome, which was constituted by the UPA government but submitted its recommendations to Jaitley.

“A taxpayer should be viewed as a customer. It would be the endeavour of the tax administration to not only `serve' the taxpayer but build a `relationship' of mutual trust and confidence with its customers and provide quality services. The present structure does not address the above objective. To bridge the gap, there is need for a new setup structure to build a strong relationship with its customers. The effort should be to integrate taxpayer services, taxpayer communication and education, taxpayer feedback and grievance redressal under one umbrella,“ TARC had said.

It had recommended a common setup for large taxpayers with both CBDT and CBEC joining hands.

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