

## **Deputy Finance Minister Pradit begins rollout of Customs Department reforms - opens Customs Clinic to strengthen role as trade facilitator**

- **Begins providing advance rulings on classification, valuation method for products in advance of their importation**
- **171 queries received from businesses in just 2 weeks – 145 answered**

Bangkok (7 September 2009) – Deputy Finance Minister Mr. Pradit Phataraprasit, who oversees the Customs Department, together with Director-General of the Customs Department Mr. Wisut Srisuphan, today officially opened the 'Customs Clinic' established as part of the deputy minister's reforms to make the Customs Department a trade facilitator, at the Customs Department's 120<sup>th</sup> Year Building.

Mr. Pradit said, "The Customs Clinic that we are officially launching today represents the first step in the plan to reform the Customs Department, which will see the Department transform its role from being only a collector of duties to becoming one that helps facilitate trade. With over 70% of Thailand's GDP generated by foreign trade, the Customs Department can do a lot to help businesses operate more efficiently and help Thailand become a more competitive manufacturing base as well as helping to accelerate economic recovery."

He said, "The reforms and the Customs Clinic are a result of a partnership between businesses and the Customs Department to jointly tackle problems. Through the Customs Clinic, the Customs Department will confirm to businesses how a particular product will be classified and how its duty will be calculated prior to the product being ordered or arriving at Customs. This will make it easier for businesses to estimate the costs of the machinery and goods that they import and to plan their business better. Importers will also be informed of all the documents or permits needed for their imports."

**Mr. Wisut Srisuphan, Director-General of the Customs Department, said, "The Customs Clinic was operated on a trial basis in August, and we have already received 171 queries from businesses. The most frequently asked topic is about Customs formalities, followed by Customs tariffs, prices and forbidden items. As many as 145 queries have been answered by Customs Clinic officers and experts."**

The Customs Clinic provides more than 40 experts to answer queries from businesses. For most general topics, responses are provided immediately, or at the latest within three days. For more technical queries, the Customs Clinic will coordinate with relevant agencies and revert with a reply within five days. For queries related to customs tariff classifications or price calculation methods, the clinic will provide the answer within 60 days.

The Customs Clinic can be reached via three channels: telephone at 02-667 7880-4 or e-mail at [customs\\_clinic@customs.go.th](mailto:customs_clinic@customs.go.th) or at the Customs Department and Customs Offices in Bangkok at Bangkok Port, Laem Chabang Port, Lat Krabang, Suvarnabhumi Airport as well as other customs offices/check points from 08.30 a.m.– 16.30 p.m.

Mr. Somboon Juersathienrattana, Executive Director, Thai Garment Export Co., Ltd. said, "The Customs Clinic is what businessmen have been waiting for, for a long time. It's certainly going to be a lot easier for us to do business if we are able to know in advance about the classification of items we would like to import as well as the calculation method for their price and duty. These are vital pieces of information for a business to function efficiently and I am glad that that this service is now being provided."

Mr. Pradit added that, "The next big things in the customs reform program include the amendment of the Customs Law and the implementation of several procedural improvements which are being accelerated for implementation within 2009. They are necessary to make Thailand strong economically and to improve the competitiveness of local businesses, which will benefit foreign trade in the long term and speed up economic recovery in the short term."