

# Trade data sharing: Encrypted access in works

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New Delhi, 1 November

The revenue and commerce departments are working on developing a special mechanism for sharing crucial export-import statistics, following instances of data leak putting businesses into jeopardy.

“The revenue department will be putting in place a mechanism that will allow ‘encrypted access’ to trade data that will be shared in a secure manner,” a senior government official told *Business Standard*. The departments were at odds over data sharing and a delay in compiling daily and weekly trade data. While data sharing resumed last week, the departments are trying to have a strict mechanism on the extent to which data will be shared.

The delay in sharing data came to light after the Central Board of Indirect



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- Company-wise trade data has been disseminated within “dark web”, compromising business secrecy
- Info such as volume of items imported/exported, price of commodities traded, quality and quantity of goods, etc, has been leaked
- These confidential data leaks make business vulnerable and lead to exploitation
- People suspected to be into selling this data are under probe

Taxes and Customs (CBIC) came upon at least 12 cases where the confidential data of entities/individuals such as the volume of items imported/exported, prices of commodities traded, and quality and quantity of goods were disseminated within the “dark web”, compromising business secrecy, another official with direct knowledge

of the matter said. The dark web is a term used for parts of the internet that cannot be accessed using regular browsers. Websites on the dark web cannot be crawled by search engines like Google, Yahoo, and Bing.

The CBIC’s investigation team has initiated the probe and is trying to locate the people who sold the trade

data, he said. Last month, the electronic portal of Customs — the Indian Customs Electronic Gateway (ICE-GATE) — had stopped sharing key information such as shipping bill numbers and dates, and bills of entry number in the daily trade returns.

As a result, the Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and

Statistics (DGCIS), which compiles and publishes trade statistics and comes under the commerce department, was not able to process and validate the crucial daily and weekly trade data for over two weeks.

As part of its measures to curb such leaks, both departments are even monitoring internally, ensuring checks on data usage, one of the officials said.

Compilation of daily and weekly foreign trade data is crucial because it is regularly analysed by various departments and ministries, including the department of commerce, the Prime Minister’s Office, and the inter-ministerial committee for monitoring export and import. It is particularly important, considering the need for timely data for mapping exports and imports of essential commodities as well as the progress and groundwork needed for handling FTAs.