

Information Sought:

SECTION A: CCTV SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM – PAN-INDIA DISCLOSURES

[This section invokes Section 2(f) read with the rulings in Assem Takyar v. CPIO, Supreme Court of India and Punjab State Information Commission v. SSP Fazilka (2023) , holding CCTV footage as "information" under the RTI Act]

1. CCTV Footage Retention Periods: Provide a comprehensive, formation-wise Statement of the data retention policy/practice for CCTV footage across:

- (a) All CGST Commissionerate offices
- (b) All DGGI Zonal/Sub-Zonal offices
- (c) All Preventive Units and Anti-Evasion Wings
- (d) All Customs Houses/ICD/airport formations

Specifically state, for each formation:

- The number of days or months for which footage is routinely stored and Backed up
- Whether storage is automatic overwrite or manual archive-based
- Whether footage is stored on local DVR/NVR or centralized server
- The oldest date for which CCTV footage is currently available and backed up in Each formation as on the date of this application

2. Audio-Visual Functionality Status: Provide formation-wise confirmation of the

Following:

- Whether CCTV cameras installed are equipped with audio recording capability

As mandated by the Hon'ble Supreme Court in *Paramvir Singh Saini v. Baljit Singh & Others* (2021) 1 SCC 184 regarding surveillance in public offices

- In formations where audio recording is not available or inoperative, provide:
 - The specific reasons for non-compliance with the Supreme Court directive
 - The dates when such systems last functioned with audio
 - Copies of any maintenance logs, defect registers, or communications regarding Audio malfunction
 - Details of any action taken to restore audio recording

3. System Logs and Deletion Records: Provide formation-wise:

- Copies of any system logs, deletion registers, or maintenance records showing When CCTV footage is overwritten or deleted from the system
- Confirmation of whether any written orders or instructions exist regarding Minimum or maximum retention of CCTV footage across CBEC formations, along With copies of such orders if they exist

4. Tampering and Non-Functioning Disclosure: Provide formation-wise for the Period 01.01.2025 to date:

- The periods or dates when CCTV systems were non-functional, whether Partially or completely
 - The periods or dates when audio recording was disabled or non-functional
 - Details of any incidents or complaints regarding tampering of CCTV systems
 - Whether any FIR, DJE, or inquiry was initiated regarding such non-functioning

SECTION B: PROACTIVE DISCLOSURE COMPLIANCE UNDER SECTION 4(1)(B)

[This section relies on DoPT guidelines on suo motu disclosure and the ruling in CIC/SA/A/2014/000173 regarding website-based information]

1. Website Disclosure of CCTV Information: Under Section 4(1)(b) read with DoPT O.M. dated 15.04.2013 (para on suo motu disclosure of surveillance-related Information):

- Provide the exact URL or webpage links where information regarding CCTV Surveillance systems (including number of cameras, locations, retention policy, Audio functionality status) is proactively disclosed on the official websites of:
 - CBEC or Central Board of Indirect Taxes
 - DGGI (Headquarters)
 - At least 10 major CGST Commissionerates including Mumbai, Delhi, Chennai, Kolkata, Bengaluru, Ahmedabad, Pune, Lucknow, Guwahati, and Nashik
- If such information is not proactively disclosed, provide the reasons for non-Compliance with Section 4(1)(b) read with the guidelines

2. Citizens' Charter and Visitor Handling: Under Section 4(1)(b) regarding Citizens' Charter:

- Provide copies of the Citizens' Charter or Visitor Handling Protocol applicable To visitors entering CGST and DGGI offices
- Specifically disclose the procedure and guidelines regarding:
 - Collection of identity proofs from visitors including Aadhaar
 - Recording of visitor entry and exit in registers with Reason for the visit
 - Escorting of visitors within office premises
 - Meeting procedures with officers

- If any circular or office memorandum governs these procedures, provide
Copies of such circulars

SECTION C: AADHAAR COLLECTION – CIRCULARS, REASONS, AND PRACTICES

1. Circulars and Orders Regarding Aadhaar Collection: Provide copies of all Circulars, office memoranda, instructions, or guidelines issued by CBEC, DGGI, or CGST formations (whether headquarters or field formations) from 01.01.2020 to Date regarding:

- Collection of Aadhaar card copies or photocopies from visitors or assessees
- The circumstances under which Aadhaar is mandatorily collected
- The legal basis or statutory provision cited for such collection
- Storage and disposal of Aadhaar copies so collected

2. Formation-wise Data on Aadhaar Collection: Provide formation-wise for all CGST Commissionerates and DGGI zones a statement showing:

- The total number of visitors from April 2025 to September 2025 from whom Aadhaar copies were collected
- The purpose or reason recorded for such collection, categorized as entry pass, Application filing, investigation, or other purposes
- Whether any written acknowledgment was issued for such Aadhaar collection
- The period for which such Aadhaar copies are retained
- The mechanism for destruction or disposal of such copies after the retention Period

3. Uniformity of Practice Across Formations: Provide pan-India confirmation of The following:

- Whether the practice of collecting Aadhaar copies is uniform across all Formations or varies from office to office
- If Aadhaar is collected in some formations but not others, the rationale for Such inconsistency
- Copies of any complaints or RTI applications received regarding mandatory Aadhaar collection across CBEC formations

SECTION D: INVESTIGATION-RELATED DISCLOSURES AND SECTION 8(1)(H)

[This section relies on the Delhi High Court ruling in Bhagat Singh v. CIC and the Principles in Dharambir Khattar v. CBI regarding burden of proof under Section 8(1)(h)]

1. Guidelines on Invocation of Section 8(1)(h): Provide copies of any:
 - Circulars or guidelines issued to CPIOs regarding application of Section 8(1)(h) Exemption
 - Training materials or manuals for CPIOs on handling exemption claims
 - Any review mechanism to ensure Section 8(1)(h) is not invoked mechanically
2. Data on Section 8(1)(h) Denials for the Year 2025: Provide formation-wise for All CGST and DGGI formations data for the calendar year 2025 on:
 - The number of RTI applications where information was denied or partially Denied citing Section 8(1)(h)
 - The number of first appeals where such denial was upheld or reversed
 - The number of CIC orders where such denial was found unsustainable or Mechanical
 - The names and designations of CPIOs against whom CIC imposed penalties

Under Section 20 for wrongful invocation of Section 8(1)(h)

3. File Processing Standards: Under Section 4(1)(b) regarding transparency in

Decision-making:

- Provide copies of the manual of office procedure applicable to CGST

Formations regarding:

- Maintenance of file notings
- Counter-signatures and endorsements
- Inter-departmental communications
- The period for which files are retained
- Guidelines on legibility of signatures and recording of full names and Designations on official files

SECTION E: TECHNICAL AND PROCEDURAL INFORMATION

1. Visitor Entry Registers and Preservation Period: Provide formation-wise:

- The period for which visitor entry and exit registers, whether physical or digital, Are preserved
- The policy regarding weeding out or destruction of old visitor registers
- Whether any centralized database of visitors is maintained at CBEC level

2. Email Communications as Official Record: State the policy regarding:

- Preservation of official emails as "records" under the RTI Act
- The period for which emails are retained on official servers
- Whether emails are backed up and for how long

SECTION F: COMPLIANCE WITH CIC DIRECTIONS

1. Action on CIC/SA/A/2014/000173 Principles: Provide a statement showing:

- Whether any instructions have been issued to CPIOs regarding providing direct Weblinks when information is available on websites, rather than vague References to "check website"
- The number of instances in 2025 where CPIOs were penalized for inadequate Website references
- Measures taken to ensure CPIOs comply with the duty to assist under Section 5(4)

2. Supreme Court Compliance – Paramvir Singh Saini: Provide formation-wise Status report regarding compliance with the directions in Paramvir Singh Saini v. Baljit Singh (2021) , including:

- The number of formations where CCTV with audio is fully functional
- The number of formations where CCTV without audio exists, with reasons for Non-compliance
- The timeline for achieving full compliance
- Any funds allocated or sanctioned for this purpose

Information Provided:

In this regard, it is submitted that the point wise reply of requisite information of RTI is as under:

Section A: CCTV Surveillance system – PAN India Disclosures:

1 to 4. This office operates in a rented building. Three Commissionerates are functioning in this building. The CCTV cameras installed in the office falls under the jurisdiction of the CGST Commissionerate. Therefore, the information pertaining to this Commissionerate may be treated as 'NIL'.

Section B: Provide disclosures compliance under Section 4(1)(B):

1. This office operates in a rented building. Three Commissionerates are functioning in this building. The CCTV cameras installed in the office falls under the jurisdiction of the CGST Commissionerate. Therefore, the information pertaining to this Commissionerate may be treated as 'NIL'.
2. The Citizens' Charter is available on the CBIC website. This office operates in a rented building. The responsibility for maintaining records of visitors entering in all the Commissionerates falls under the jurisdiction of the CGST Commissionerate.

Section C: Aadhaar Collection – Circulars, Reasons and Practices:

1. Does not pertain to this Commissionerate.
2. This office operates in a rented building. Maintaining a record of all visitors entering in the Commissionerate falls under the jurisdiction of the CGST Commissionerate.
3. Does not pertain to this Commissionerate.

Section D: Investigation – Related Disclosures and Section 8(1)(H):

1. All circulars and guidelines are available on the CBIC website.
2. In the year 2025, this office rejected total 3 RTI applications and 1 First Appeal application, citing Section 8(1)(j).

No order has been issued by the CIC finding such rejections to be improper or mechanical, nor have any penalties been imposed on the CPIOs.

3. All circulars and guidelines are available on the CBIC website.

Section E: Technical and Procedural Information:

1. This office operates in a rented building. Maintaining records of all visitors entering in the Commissionerate falls under the jurisdiction of the CGST Commissionerate.
2. All RTI applications are filed by the appellant on the RTI portal, and these applications are permanently preserved. They cannot be removed from the RTI portal.

Section F: Compliance with CIC Directions:

1. This Commissionerate does not possess any such information. Therefore, the information held by this Commissionerate may be treated as 'NIL'.
2. This office operates in a rented building. The CCTV cameras installed within the office falls under the jurisdiction of the CGST Commissionerate.