

Sutera Lane Merchant Scheme to Facilitate Trade in the Country

The rapid increase in international trade in recent years has made trade facilitation as one of the main agenda at the World Trade Organization (WTO) and World Customs Organization (WCO) conferences. As a member of WTO and WCO, Brunei Darussalam is committed to fulfil its obligations to improve trade facilitation through transparent and efficient customs procedures. The initiative will further improve the trading environment in Brunei Darussalam and support the business community.

Effective from 2nd September 2017, the Ministry of Finance through the Royal Customs and Excise Department (RCED) has implemented an accredited client scheme known as Sutera Lane Merchant Scheme (SLMS), an adaptation of Authorised Economic Operator (AEO) standards which is a globally recognized trade facilitation tool by the WCO. The implementation of SLMS is one of the activities listed in the Ease of Doing Business (EODB) Action Plan under Trading across Borders initiatives. It is a pro-business approach focusing on trade facilitation without compromising the country's security and safety. The implementation is also in accordance with the standards and best practices of international customs as recommended by the WCO in particular under the WCO Framework of Standards to Secure and Facilitate Global Trade (SAFE Framework).



Reduced customs inspection is one of the benefits under the scheme

The SLMS will also promote high level of compliance among importers, exporters or any customs agents to the existing procedures, laws and regulations in Brunei Darussalam with RCED providing a list of standards to be complied with. The scheme will accelerate the process of approval and clearance of goods imported into and exported from Brunei Darussalam. This includes faster issuance and approval of permits, customs declarations, clearance and release

processes, reduced inspection requirements (i.e. only performed if required at the SLMS Operator's premises) and deferment of payment of duties within a specified period.

Companies interested to join the scheme, must be registered under the Companies Act Chapter 39 as a Private Limited Company. Importers and exporters must also be registered with RCED as 'traders' in the Brunei Darussalam National Single Window (BDNSW). Usage of Freight Forwarders/ Forwarding Agents or Transporting Companies are also allowed, provided the importing and exporting companies include in the application, documents that prove that they are the designated Freight Forwarders/ Forwarding Agents or transporting companies for the importing or exporting companies.



A container is being loaded onto a transporting truck at the Muara Container Terminal

The company must have been established for at least 5 years and handles import and export activities for not less than 3 years. If the application is forwarded by Multi-National Companies (MNCs) set up in the country less than five years, the application will be assessed on a case-by-case basis and is subject to the decision of the SLMS Evaluation Committee.

To ensure its success, collaboration with and support from Other Government Agencies (OGAs) that issue import and export permits are crucial. The business community, on the other hand stands to benefit from the implementation. It will make Brunei Darussalam not only a preferred trade and investment destination recognized in the international arena but will enhance the country's effort to attract more foreign direct investments and diversify the country's economy.

Ministry of Finance