

OPPI upset over poor cold room storage facility at airports, seaports

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Suja Nair Shirodkar, Mumbai

Organisation of Pharmaceutical Producers of India expressed serious concern over the poor cold room storage facility at the country's major airports and seaports. Pharmaceutical companies have been facing problems with respect to cold room storage at the New Delhi airport terminal while exporting and importing of their products for some time now.

Over the years the pharma companies have been relying on major airports and seaports for quality storage infrastructure and service as per GMP norms for export and import of pharmaceuticals. "Unfortunately, pharmaceuticals are, by and large, treated like just any other product at these ports, even today. We have reported and impressed upon the authorities that due to inadequate storage and handling of these drugs at ports, high dwell time, dispersed multiple authorities from whom clearances are required, the quality of the products may get adversely affected due to temperature excursions," informed Tapan Ray, director general, OPPI.

OPPI has said that there is a serious problem of cold storage facility affecting imports and exports of pharmaceutical products. "Though the exposed products may look just the same, their quality standards may be adversely affected, impairing their effectiveness and safety profile for the patients," warned Ray.

Elaborating the problems facing during import, Ray pointed out that existing cold room does not have enough space to accommodate big shipments and airport does not confirm availability of space even if the companies approach in advance with information of shipment. Many a times companies are asked to take direct delivery due to space constraint and thus it clearly points out that the current capacity is inadequate to handle the volume of traffic.

The airport authorities charge a premium terminal handling charges for perishable cold chain consignments. However, when the cold room space is not available to importers, the high terminal charges are still levied without the requisite services being provided, which OPPI feel is not fair. There is no separate air conditioned examination area/loading bay for perishable cargo. The perishable cargo is examined outside the cold room at normal temperatures. Also the loading bay provided for taking goods out of the airport is the same as is used for normal cargo. In summer, the temperature goes as high as 45 degree Celsius adversely affecting the perishable consignments. Thus a dedicated air-conditioned examination and loading bay needs be provided for such consignments. OPPI has also expressed their concern over the absence of a temperature monitoring mechanism available in the facility.

Speaking about the problems faced during exports, Ray informed that the layout and design of current agricultural and processed food products export development authority (APEDA) cold room are not suitable enough. Similarly priority to pharmaceuticals which are perishable due to poor storage and transport conditions is given last at current APEDA facility in Delhi. Another observation made by the OPPI is that the current palletisation procedure at APEDA cold room is quite outdated, where the palletising staff needs to stand on the cargo, unlike better palletising procedure where the loading bays get lowered so as to avoid the boxes getting crushed.

A world class cold chain infrastructure and its efficient management within the country will help immensely the Indian pharmaceutical companies, as well, as they explore more and more opportunities to export Biopharmaceuticals in the global market. Thus the importance of pharma zones at all major airports and seaports cannot be ignored and needs to be looked in.

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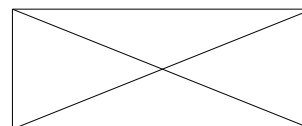
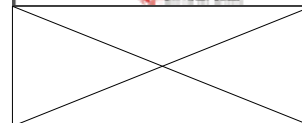
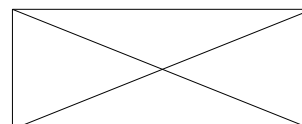
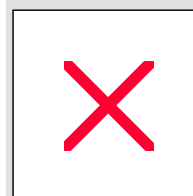
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