

**IN THE CUSTOMS, EXCISE AND SERVICE TAX APPELLATE
TRIBUNAL, WEST ZONAL BENCH AT MUMBAI
COURT NO. IV**

APPEAL NO. C/426 to 428/2010

(Arising out of Order-in-Original No. 79/2010 dated 19.04.2010 passed by the Commissioner of Customs (Export), JNCH, Nhava Sheva.)

**M/s RSWM Ltd.
Shri Prem Kumar Dhanuka
Shri Murari Lal Jhunjhunwala**

Appellant

Vs.

**Commissioner of Customs (Export),
Nhava Sheva**

Respondent

Appearance:

Shri T. Viswanathan, Advocate
Shri Chatru Singh, Assistant Commissioner (A.R.)

for Appellant
for Respondent

CORAM:

**HON'BLE SHRI RAMESH NAIR, MEMBER (JUDICIAL)
HON'BLE SHRI RAJU, MEMBER (TECHNICAL)**

Date of Hearing: 26.04.2018
Date of Decision: 18.05.2018

ORDER NO. A/86417-86419/2018

Per: Ramesh Nair:

The facts of the case are that the appellant have imported goods under Duty Free Credit Entitlement scheme by debiting the duty in terms of Notification No. 53/2003-Cus. dated 01.04.2003 as amended. The contention of the Department is that during the period of import i.e. from 01.03.2006 to 18.12.2006 the SAD was not

exempted under Notification No. 53/2003-Cus. therefore debited in respect of SAD (Special Additional Duty of Customs) made by the appellant is incorrect to that extent the appellant is liable to pay the Customs duty.

2. Shri T. Viswanathan, Learned Counsel appearing on behalf of the appellant submits that the Revenue has denied the exemption of Special Additional Duty of Customs, on the ground that during the relevant period the exemption was available in respect of additional duty leviable under sub-Section (1) of Section 3 of the said Customs Tariff Act, 1975 and Special Additional Duty of Customs leviable thereon under Section 3A of said Customs Tariff Act, 1975, whereas Special Additional Duty of Customs was leviable under Section 3(5) of the Customs Tariff Act, 1975 which was not exempted under the Notification No. 53/2003-Cus. dated 01.04.2003. He submits that before the amendment in Section 3 the Special Additional Duty of Customs was leviable under Section 3 of the Customs Tariff Act which was substituted by Section 3(5) of Customs Tariff Act. Therefore the exemption provided to Special Additional Duty of Customs under Section 3A of the Customs Tariff Act is nothing but is leviable under Section 3(5) of Customs Tariff Act, 1975. He submits that sub-Section 3A was substituted vide sub-Section 3(5) but it appears an apparent error on the part of the legislators. He further alternatively submits that the Special Additional Duty of Customs leviable under Section 3(5) of the Customs Tariff Act, 1975 was otherwise exempted by Notification No. 20/2006-Cus. dated 01.03.2006 wherein as per Sr. No. 1 of table of the Notification No. 20/2006 all the goods which

are exempted from payment of the Customs duty are exempted from Special Additional Duty of Customs leviable under sub-section 5 of Section 3 of the Customs Tariff Act, 1975. In the present case there is no dispute that under Notification No. 53/2003-Cus, the goods imported under Duty Free Credit Entitlement certificate is exempted from whole of the duty of Customs, whole of the additional duty leviable under sub-section (1) of Section 3 of the said Customs Tariff Act and whole of the special additional duty of Customs leviable thereon under Section 3A of said Customs Tariff Act. Therefore the special additional duty of Customs leviable under sub-section (5) of Section 3 is clearly exempted under Notification No. 53/2003-Cus, therefore even the appellant was not required to debit the duty of special additional duty in the Duty Free Credit Entitlement scrip. Therefore on both the count demand is not sustainable. He placed reliance on the judgement of Delhi Tribunal in the case of *Punj Lloyd Ltd. Vs. Commissioner of Customs, New Delhi - 2016 (340) ELT 267 (Tri.-Del.)*.

3. Shri Chatru Singh, Learned Assistant Commissioner (A.R.) appearing on behalf of the Revenue reiterates the finding of the impugned order. He further submits that during the relevant period there was no exemption available to the special additional duty leviable under Section 3(5) of the Customs Tariff Act under the Notification No. 53/2003-Cus. dated 01.04.2003. Therefore the debit made to the extent of the special additional duty in the Duty Free Credit Entitlement scrip which is incorrect and illegal. He further submits that the appellant is not entitled for the exemption

Notification No. 20/2006-Cus for the reason that the exemption under Notification No. 53/2003-Cus is by way of debit in the Duty Free Credit Entitlement scrip which issued under Target Plus Scheme of FTP, therefore the duty per se is not exempted. The exemption in respect of special additional duty is available under Notification No. 20/2006-Cus only in such cases where the goods are exempted from payment of Customs duty.

4. We have carefully considered the submissions made by both sides and perused the records. We find that there is alternative exemption notification in respect of special additional duty leviable under Section 3(5) of Customs Tariff Act, 1975 under Notification No. 20/2006-Cus. As per said notification all goods are exempted from payment of special additional duty, if the goods are exempted from payment of whole of Customs duty and whole of additional duty leviable under Section 3(1) of Customs Tariff Act, 1975. In the present case the goods imported are admittedly exempted from whole of the Customs duty and additional duty under Section 3(1) of the said Act, therefore special additional duty is exempted under Notification No. 20/2006-Cus. The contention of the Learned AR that the goods imported by the appellant is not exempted in terms of Notification No. 53/2003-Cus because the said notification provides the debit of duty in the scrip therefore the goods are not exempted. We do not agree with this contention for the reason that Notification No. 53/2003-Cus is very much exempt the goods which can be seen in the preamble of the notification which is reproduced below:-

“Exemption to goods imported against Duty Free Entitlement Credit Certificate — In exercise of the powers conferred by sub-section (1) of section 25 of the Customs Act, 1962 (52 of 1962), the Central Government, being satisfied that it is necessary in the public interest so to do, hereby exempts goods when imported into India against a duty free entitlement credit certificate (hereinafter referred to as the said certificate) issued under paragraph 3.7.2.1 (vi) of the Export and Import Policy, -

- (a) from the whole of the duty of customs leviable thereon under the First Schedule to the Customs Tariff Act 1975 (51 of 1975);*
- (b) from the whole of the additional duty leviable thereon under sub-section (1) of section 3 of the said Customs Tariff Act; and*
- (c) from the whole of the special additional duty of customs leviable thereon under section 3A of said Customs Tariff Act,*

subject to the following conditions, namely,

- (1) that the said certificate has been issued by the licensing authority to a status holder specified in para 3.7.2 of the Export and Import Policy;”*

From the above preamble of the notification it can be seen that Notification No. 53/2003-Cus clearly provide the exemption from whole of the duty of Customs, whole of the additional duty leviable under sub-section (1) of Section 3 of the said Customs Tariff Act and whole of the special additional duty of Customs leviable thereon under Section 3A of said Customs Tariff Act. Therefore it cannot be said that the goods imported under Duty Free Credit Entitlement certificate is not exempted. Our above view is supported by Hon'ble High Court of Gujarat in the case of *Gujarat Ambuja Exports Ltd. Vs. Union of India – 2013 (288) ELT 49 (Guj.)*, wherein it was held as under:-

“8. Having, thus, heard the learned counsel for the parties, we find that under exemption Notification No. 20/2006, the Government of India has granted exemption from payment of SAD on import of “all goods which are exempt from the whole of the duty of customs leviable thereon or in case of which “Free” or “Nil” rates of duty of customs are specified” “and which are also exempt from the whole of additional duty of customs leviable thereon under sub-section (1) of Section 3 of the said Act, or on which no amount of the said additional duties of customs is payable for any reason.”.

9. The short question that falls for consideration is whether on the import of goods made by the petitioner under DEPB scheme, whole of basic customs duty and additional duty of customs exempt. If answer to this question is in the affirmative, the petitioners’ claim for exemption from payment of SAD also will have to be accepted. If the answer to such a question is in the negative, the petitioners cannot avoid payment of SAD on imports of such goods.

10. Before proceeding further, we may recall that under exemption Notification No. 46/2002, edible oils have been granted exemption from payment of basic and additional duty of customs only to the extent of 50% of the rates applied. Thus, such exemption is not for the whole of the duty of customs and additional duty. In that view of the matter, on the imports of edible oils, the condition of exemption Notification No. 20/2006 would not be satisfied. We may recall that to avail exemption from payment of SAD under said notification, what is required is exemption from the whole of the duty of customs and the additional duty of customs, unless of course “free” or “Nil” rates of duties are specified for such duties on such products. When the exemption is not total but only partial, such condition would not be satisfied. In that view of the matter, the petitioners cannot claim exemption from payment of SAD on the imports of edible oils.

11. With respect to goods other than edible oils, under Notification No. 45/2002, there is total exemption from payment of basic as well as additional customs duty on import made under DEPB scheme. Such exemption, of course, is conditional. The stand of the respondents has been that there is no exemption from payment of customs

duty, but that the importer pays such duties by surrendering credit lying in the scrip.

12. *In context of liability of an importer to pay Education Cess on goods imported under DEPB scheme, we had occasion to examine the nature of DEPB scheme, as also the contention of the revenue that under such scheme, the customs duty is not waived. In the process, we had also examined the legality of a circular dated 31-1-2005 issued by the Government of India clarifying such position. We had come to the conclusion that the exemption notification operates in such a manner that on the imports made by an importer under DEPB scheme, there was either total or partial exemption from payment of customs duty. In the process, we had quashed the circular of the Government dated 31-1-2005. We notice this because in the impugned circular dated 5-6-2006, to clarify that the petitioners cannot claim exemption from payment of SAD, it is the earlier circular dated 31-1-2005 which has been referred to and relied upon. Essentially, assertions of the Revenue in both circulars, that is, earlier circular dated 31-1-2005 and the impugned circular dated 5-6-2006 are common. Our decision dated 21-6-2012 would, therefore, squarely apply in the present case.*

13. *In our judgment dated 21-6-2012, we had stated as under :*

“10. From the above provision, it can be seen that education cess is to be collected on the customs duty levied and collected by the Central Government at the rate of 2% on such duty. In the present case, therefore, it would be important to ascertain whether on the imports made under DEPB scheme, it can be stated that the Central Government is levying and collecting duties of customs.

11. In order to be able to do so, we would have to appreciate the nature of the DEPB scheme. The DEPB scheme is a part of Exim Policy of the Government of India formulated under Section 5 of the Foreign Trade (Development and Regulation) Act, 1992. The policy outlines the objectives including to accelerate the country's transition to globally oriented vibrant economy with a view to derive maximum benefits from expanding global market opportunities and to stimulate sustained economic growth by providing access to essential raw materials,

intermediates, components, consumables and capital goods required for augmenting production.

12. Chapter 7 of the Export and Import Policy pertains to duty exemption schemes. Various duty remission schemes framed by the Government enables post export replenishment/remission of duty on the inputs used in the export production. Duty Entitlement Passbook Scheme is one such duty remission schemes. The object of DEPB scheme is to neutralize the incidence of customs duty on the import component of the export product. Such neutralization is provided by way of grant of duty credit against export product. In such a scheme, an exporter may apply for credit, as a specified percentage of FOB value of exports made in freely convertible currency. The credit shall be available against such export products and at such rates as may be specified by the Director General of Foreign Trade. The duty credit under the scheme would be calculated by taking into account the deemed import component of an export product as per the SION norms and the basic customs duty payable on such deemed imports.

13. In case of Liberty India v. Commissioner of Income-Tax reported in 317 ITR 218 the Apex Court traced the nature of DEPB benefits and made following observations :-

“DEPB is an incentive. It is given under the Duty Exemption Remission Scheme. Essentially, it is an export incentive. No doubt, the object behind DEPB is to neutralize the incidence of customs duty payment on the import content of export product. This neutralization is provided for by credit to customs duty against export product. Under DEPB, an exporter may apply for credit as a percentage of the FOB value of exports made in freely convertible currency. Credit is available only against the export product and at rates specified by the DGFT for import of raw materials, components etc., DEPB credit under the Scheme has to be calculated by taking into account the deemed import content of the export product as per basic customs duty and special additional duty payable on such deemed exports. Therefore, in our view, DEPB/Duty drawback are incentives which flow from the schemes framed by Central Government or from Section 75 of the Customs Act, 1962, hence, incentives profits are not profits derived from the

eligible business under Section 80-IB. They belong to the category of ancillary profits of such undertakings.”

14. *Section 25 of the Customs Act, 1962 empowers the Central Government to grant exemption from duty. Sub-section (1) of Section 25 in particular provides that if the Central Government is satisfied that it is necessary in the public interest so to do, it may, by notification in the Official Gazette, exempt generally, either absolutely or subject to such conditions as may be specified in the notification, goods of any specified description from the whole or any part of the duty of customs leviable.*

15. *In exercise of powers under Section 25 of the Customs Act, 1962, the Government of India vide its exemption Notification No. 45/2002, granted total exemption from payment of customs duty and additional duty on goods other than edible oils on imports being made under DEPB scheme subject to certain conditions. Such exemption on edible oils, however, was limited to 50% of the standard rate of duty applied as also 50% of the additional duty. Such conditions relevant for our purpose read as under :-*

(i) that the importer has been issued a Duty Entitlement Pass Book by the Licensing Authority in terms of paragraph 4.3 of the Export and Import Policy;

(ii) the importer has been permitted credit entries in the said Duty Entitlement Pass Book by the Licensing Authority at the rates notified by the Government of India in the Ministry of Commerce for the products exported;

(iii) the said Duty Entitlement Pass Book is produced before the proper officer of Customs for debit of the duties leviable on the goods but for exemption contained herein.

16. *From the nature of DEPB scheme and the exemption granted to imports made under such scheme, it can be seen that the very purpose is to neutralize the import duty component on the imported goods used for production of export items. Such object is achieved through the DEPB scheme under which the exporter is given the facility of utilizing the credits in the DEPB scrips for the purpose of adjustment against the customs duty liability on the goods imported for the ultimate purpose of export on value addition.*

17. We may recall that Chapter 7 of the Export-Import Policy pertains to duty exemption/remission schemes. Para 7.1 thereof provides that the duty exemption scheme enables import of inputs required for export production. The duty remission scheme enables post export replenishment/remission of duty on inputs used in the export product. Such remission schemes include Advance License Scheme and Duty Free Replenishment Certificate Scheme as also the Duty Entitlement Passbook Scheme. Para 7.14 of said Chapter 7 of the Export-Import Policy pertains to Duty Entitlement Passbook Scheme. It states at the outset that for the exporters not desirous of going through the licensing route, an optional facility is given under DEPB. The object of DEPB scheme is to neutralize the incidence of customs duty on the import component of the export product. It further provides that such neutralization shall be provided by way of grant of duty credit against the export product.

18. From the nature of DEPB scheme noted above and the exemption from payment of customs duty on imports made under such scheme, it can be gathered that the very purpose of granting such exemption is to neutralize the customs duty, on the import component of the export product. In essence, the Government of India grants duty remission at prescribed rates on the imports made under such a scheme.

19. It can thus not be denied that for the imports made under the DEPB scheme, there is total or partial, as the case may be, exemption in payment of customs duty. At the relevant time, for the goods other than edible oil, such exemption was total. For edible oil, such exemption was to the extent of 50% of the customs duty and additional duty payable. In essence, therefore, for imports made under the DEPB scheme, of course, subject to the conditions specified in the exemption notification, the customs duty was exempt. Merely because the conditions provided for adjustment of credit in the DEPB scrips, it cannot be stated that either there was no exemption from payment of customs duty or that the Central Government was levying and collecting customs duty from the importers in form of adjustment of credit in the DEPB scrips. We may recall that such credits are given at specified rates on the basis of SION norms primarily taking into account deemed import contents of an export product and the basic customs duty

payable on such deemed imports. Thus through such adjustments on the DEPB scrips at the time of further imports, customs duty component is sought to be neutralised. The view expressed by the Tribunal in the case of Reliance Industries Ltd. (supra) appeals to us. In the said decision, the Tribunal taking note of the provisions contained in Section 81 and 84 of the Finance Act, 2004 held that the impugned circular No. 5/2005 is not legally sustainable. The Tribunal held that crediting and debiting of entries in the passbook is a matter of procedure and convenience and in essence, the Notification No. 45/2002 provides for full exemption from payment of customs duty.

20. *We may also recall that the Larger Bench of the Tribunal in the case of Essar Steel Ltd. (supra) held that mere entry in the DEPB book is not sufficient for eligibility of Modvat credit availed on the strength of Bill of Entry where the importer had availed of benefit of the exemption from payment of customs duty. This would further go to show that while no customs duty is paid, there would be no question of availing Modvat credit on such duty.*

21. *We may notice that vide circular dated 8-7-2004, the Ministry of Finance, in a question whether goods that are fully exempt from excise/customs duty or are cleared without payment of such duty would be subject to education cess, clarified that the education cess is leviable at the rate of 2% of the aggregate of the duties of excise/customs levied and collected. If goods are fully exempted from excise duty or customs duty or are chargeable to nil rate of duty or are cleared without payment of duty under specified procedure such as clearance bond, there is no collection of duty and, therefore, no education cess would be leviable on such clearances.*

22. *In view of such clarification by the Government and in view of our conclusions hereinabove that against an import made under the DEPB scheme, of the goods which are fully exempt from payment of customs duty and therefore no customs duty is levied and collected, the education cess at the prescribed rate also cannot be levied.*

23. *We are not unmindful of the decision of Madras High Court in the case of Tanfac Industries Ltd. v. Asstt. Commr. of Cus., Cuddalore reported in [2009 \(240\) E.L.T. 341](#). In*

the said case, in the background of interest on warehoused goods where such demand of interest on goods cleared beyond 90 days arose, the Division Bench of the High Court came to the conclusion that on the imports under DEPB scheme, the importers pay duty not by cash but by way of credit and, therefore, the goods cleared under DEPB scheme cannot be treated as exempted goods. It can only be treated as duty-paid goods.

24. *With respect, we are unable to concur with such a view. Firstly, in the said decision, the question of levy of education cess was not involved. More particularly in our view, the exemption notification No. 45/2002 is issued under the exercise of powers under Section 25 of the Customs Act, 1962. Such notification grants total exemption from payment of customs duty and additional duty on all goods other than edible oils which are imported under DEPB scheme. It is, of course, subject to conditions specified in the notification itself. Such conditions require adjustment of the credit in the DEPB scrip against the customs duty liability. However, such adjustment is only procedural in nature. As noted earlier, para 7.14 of the Export-Import Policy clearly provided that the exporter who does not desire to go through the licensing route would have an optional facility of being governed under the DEPB scheme.*

25. *We may note that in cases of Advance License Schemes under which imports are being made and which are exempt from customs duty under various notifications issued by the Central Government under Section 25 of the Customs Act, 1962, no education cess is demanded by the respondents. In fact, the impugned notification itself is sufficiently clear and records that imports against Advanced Licenses are exempt from all duties of customs and therefore, it follows that education cess at 2% is not leviable on such imports. In case of DEPB, however, a distinction is sought to be drawn on the premise that though the importers are governed by exemption notification, the fact remains that in case of such imports, the duty is debited from DEPB scrip. To our mind, such distinction is not valid. The clarificatory circular itself refers to the imports made under the DEPB scheme being covered under exemption notification. Such exemption is, of course, subject to fulfilment of certain conditions. One of the conditions includes that of adjustment of credit in the DEPB*

scrip. This, however, is merely procedural in nature and would not change the nature of benefit from one being of exemption.

26. Respondents, however, have contended that Education Cess is not exempt under Notification No. 5/2002 and the importer therefore cannot pay the same on imports made under the DEPB scheme. We may recall that under the impugned clarificatory circular, Government has provided that such Education Cess will also be adjusted against credit in the DEPB scrip. If Education Cess is not part of the exemption as contended by the respondents, how can it be adjusted against the credit in DEPB scrip by enforcing the condition of the Exemption Notification? This to our mind is a legal fallacy.

27. Under the circumstances, the impugned circular insofar as it pertains to DEPB scrip, is held to be invalid and contrary to Section 81 read with Section 84 of the Finance Act, 2004 and is hereby quashed and set aside.

28. The impugned duty demands, were even otherwise made without issuing any show-cause notice or adjudication. Even on such grounds, the notices are liable to be quashed. We hereby do so.

29. Before closing, however, we would like to clarify two aspects. Firstly, with respect to those items whose imports under DEPB scheme enjoy only partial exemption from payment of customs duty, it is an admitted position on part of the petitioner that education cess would be leviable on such portion of customs duty as is not exempt. The second aspect is that while admitting this petition, a Division Bench of this court had directed that the demands to impugned notices were raised without any adjudication. In the affidavit-in-reply filed by the respondents, it is stated that such notices have now been issued. It is open for the respondents to proceed further with the hearing of such notices and come to a conclusion in accordance with law of course bearing in mind the conclusions that we have arrived at in this petition.”

14. *Under the circumstances, we are of the opinion that the stand of the respondents that on goods other than edible oils when imported under DEPB scheme, SAD is leviable is not legally sustainable. To that extent, the petition must succeed. The impugned circular to the extent*

it is in conflict with our above opinion, would stand invalidated.

15. *Before closing, we may record that the petitioners have been clearing their goods during the pendency of this petition by paying SAD. Our declaration, therefore, shall apply in future imports. We reiterate that on any goods whenever the customs duty or additional duty is not fully exempt when imported under DEPB scheme, the entire amount of SAD would have to be paid by the importer.”*

From the above judgment it can be seen that though in the case of DEPB scheme exemption is provided by debiting the duty in DEPB scrip, it is considered as exempted. The similar procedure is available in the Notification No. 53/2003-Cus, therefore the ratio is squarely covered in the present case for the purpose under Notification No. 20/2006-Cus. Accordingly the condition of the Notification No. 20/2006-Cus is fully complied with, therefore the special additional duty cannot be demanded from the appellant. The identical issue has been considered by this Tribunal in the case of *Punj Lloyd Ltd. (supra)* wherein the Tribunal passed the following order:-

“5. *We have considered the contentions of both sides. We find that by virtue of Notification No. 20/2006-Cus., the Govt. of India granted exemption from payment of SAD. The relevant portion of the said Notification is reproduced below :-*

Sr. No.	Chapter, heading, sub-heading or tariff item of the First Schedule	Description of goods	Standard rate
1	2	3	4
1	Any Chapter	All goods which are exempt from the whole of	Nil

		<i>the duty of customs leviable thereon or in case of which “Free” or “Nil” rates of duty of customs are specified in column (4) under the First Schedule of the Customs Tariff Act, 1975 (51 of 1975) and which are also exempt from the whole of additional duty of customs leviable thereon under sub-section (1) of Section 3 of the said Act, or on which no amount of the said additional duties of customs is payable for any reason.</i>	
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We find that the only condition for exemption from SAD in Notification 20/2006-Cus. is that the goods should be exempt from payment of basic customs duty and countervailing duty [leviable under Section 3(1) of the Customs Tariff Act, 1975] the above quoted language of the exemption notification nowhere states that the exemption should be unconditional. It is a fact that vide Notification No. 54/2003-Cus., basic customs duty and countervailing duty [under Section 3(1) of the Customs Tariff Act, 1975] were exempted during the relevant period. [Indeed w.e.f. 19-12-2006 even SAD leviable under Section 3(5) of Customs Tariff Act, 1975 was also exempted under Notification No. 54/2003-Cus. but as the Bills of Entry in this case were of date prior to 19-12-2006, this is of no relevance for the present case]. However, the fact remains that during the relevant period the impugned goods were fully exempt from basic Customs duty as well as CVD [leviable under Section 3(1) of Customs Tariff Act, 1975] and consequently, they (i.e., the impugned goods) were entitled to the benefit of Notification No. 20/2006-Cus. Indeed in a similar set of circumstances in the case of Gujarat Ambuja Exports Ltd. v. Union of India (supra), Gujarat High Court held that the import goods were entitled to the benefit of Notification No. 20/2006-Cus. when they (import goods) were exempt from duty under Notification No. 45/2002-Cus. when imported under DEPB scheme (where the duty is debited to the duty entitlement pass book). The ratio of this judgment is clearly applicable to the present case.

6. *In the light of the foregoing, we allow the appeal and remand the case to the primary adjudicating authority for granting consequential relief to the appellant subject to the condition that the burden of SAD has not been passed on by the appellant to any other person.”*

5. Since we decide the exemption of special additional duty leviable under Section 3(5) of Customs Tariff Act only on the basis of Notification No. 20/2006-Cus. We need not to address the exemption of such duty under Notification No. 53/2003-Cus. Accordingly, the impugned order is not sustainable hence the same is set aside. The appeals are allowed.

(Pronounced in Court on 18.05.2018)

(Raju)
Member (Technical)

(Ramesh Nair)
Member (Judicial)

Sp