



Commerce and Industry Minister Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman has said that India should take lead in making quality products available to world at an affordable price.

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Commerce and Industry Minister Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman has said that India should take lead in making quality products available to world at an affordable price. Inaugurating the 4th National Standards Conclave organized by the Department of Commerce in association with CII, BIS, EIC, FSSAI, APEDA and NABCB she emphasized while standards as signifying quality are important but they also need to be affordable for manufacturers to comply and consumers to buy. She said Prime Minister's 'Zero Effect Zero Defect' idea aims at exactly this. She cited The Mangalyan launch costing and worldclass quality is a prime example of quality with affordability.

Commerce and Industry Minister appreciated that a 'standards strategy document' is going to be the possible outcome of this conclave however, she emphasised that long term strategy should not lose sight of immediate challenges. Smt. Sitharaman stated that any national strategy for standards should be able to factor in technology to disseminate any change in import requirements in foreign countries so that our exporters are well prepared to overcome those barriers. This dissemination has to be in regional languages. She said this has become critical as number of notifications in WTO have increased and many deal with standards .

The Minister highlighted the issues confronting agriculture sector, where the nature of standards set in international bodies often militate against the Indian varieties. She stressed that International standards especially in food produce must value variety over homogeneity and India must participate actively in such Standards setting. When Sanitary and Phyto-Sanitary (SPS) controls are put on agro products, like mango or grapes unilaterally, they hurt our farmers. Similarly, the Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs) of certain pesticides or biocides are altered too quickly in the foreign markets and farmers are taken by surprise. So, efforts must be put to create quick information system for such farmers and exporters. She hoped that the proposed strategy would provide a guide or a kind of framework so that we avoid such crises at negotiation stage it self.

The Minister also **launched the India Standards Portal** – a one stop portal for all information on Standards, Technical Regulations, conformity assessment & accreditation practices, and the related bodies in India and advised that portal should also help exporters to identify regulations in various countries abroad.

In his address, Mr. R V Deshpande, Minister for Large and Medium Industries and Infrastructure Development, Government of Karnataka, highlighted the strategy adopted by his state to put in place a robust standards eco system. These include besides providing incentives to the industrial units adopting standards, insistence on procurement of products and services which conform to the standards, ensuring infrastructure is available in the state and focus on Research and Development.

Ms. Rita Teatota, Secretary, Department of Commerce highlighted the legislative reforms that have been happening as a result of series of national and regional Conclaves. She stated that since the last edition of the Conclave, the new BIS Act had been passed and the Consumer Protection Act is also proposed to include a new chapter on Product Liability. This would help strengthen the standards ecosystem in the country. She also noted that for the first time, standards in the services sector were getting attention. She suggested that there was a need to develop a National Strategy for Standards as well as Vision Document for the same.

Ms. Alka Panda, Director General, Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) highlighted the role that the BIS was playing in the development of standards in the country. Mr. Adil Zainulbhai, Chairman, Quality Council of India stated that there was a need to work with Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to help improve their standards. He also spoke of the need to create a standards compliance system which was easy to comply with and emphasized that standards should be seen as an opportunity rather than as a threat.

Mr. Rakesh Bharti Mittal, President Designate, and Mr. Chandrajit Banerjee, Director General of CII also spoke in the inaugural affirming Industries' commitment to graduate to a high Standards regime in the country.

Mr. Sudhanshu Pandey, Joint Secretary, Department of Commerce, Ministry of Commerce and Industry proposed the Vote of Thanks.

MJPS

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