

'New standards must to check import quality'

BIS needs to speed up work, says Commerce Minister

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Sub-standard imports can be checked only if India develops the required standards and technical regulations in key sectors to improve quality of products domestically, Commerce and Industry Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said.

"Right now we don't have any legitimate way to stop imports of poor quality products except through higher tariffs and quantitative restrictions, which have their limitations. We have to put in black and white the standards we want in each sector. I want pressure to be on us to come up with a listed set of norms," the Minister said speaking at the 'standards conclave' organised by the CII in partnership with the Centre for WTO Studies and BIS on Thursday. The government has been unable to stop imports of a number of cheap and low quality items such as plastic idols, helmets, certain chemicals and various electric items from flowing into India from countries such as China due to absence of mandatory domestic standards.

Standard setting body BIS has



Nirmala Sitharaman
Commerce & Industry Minister

to do some catching up in the area of setting standards, Sitharaman said. "We want the BIS to speed up its work of coordinating with various Ministries and Departments to develop standards in various sectors," she said.

The Minister added that standards needed to be improved not only for exports but also for the domestic consumer. It is necessary to empower regulatory bodies or many standards will remain on paper, pointed out Commerce Secretary Rita Teatota. She said that it was important for India to play an active role in global standard making bodies that that the country's concerns are reflected in the final outcome. Teatota said that the government plans to develop standards for services and three sectors — tourism, healthcare and education — have been identified where work can be initiated.