

FSSAI should take the lead to look at issue of standards, observes Goyal

Thursday, 16 January, 2020

Our Bureau, New Delhi

India needed to be recognised both as an exporter of quality goods and services as well as an importer of the same. A zero-tolerance policy in terms of standards needed to be put in place with agencies like FSSAI taking the lead. This observation was made by Piyush Goyal, Minister for Commerce & Industry and Railways, while addressing the 6th National Standards Conclave: Standards for Trade Facilitation here recently.

The conclave was organised by Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), Department of Commerce, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), Export Inspection Council of India (EIC), National Accreditation Board for Certification Bodies (NABCB) and the Centre for Research on International Trade.

According to the minister, while India has signed a number of FTA's with different countries, it has not been able to take advantage of these agreements due to the poor quality of Indian goods or due to Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs). He stated that as compared to countries such as the US, Brazil and China, the number of SPS / TBT notifications issued by India is a very paltry number.

He stated that not only did Indian goods find it difficult to penetrate overseas markets due to poor quality, goods coming in from overseas were also of poor quality thanks largely to the under-rated standards prevailing in India.

He called for agencies such as the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) and the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) to look at the entire issue of standards in a mission mode. He called for National Treatment to be accorded to standards i.e. the same standards would apply to both goods produced in India as well as imported goods. He was also of the view that India needed to step up the infrastructure required for standards such as testing facilities and laboratories. He highlighted the need to enter into Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs) with other countries in terms of standards compliance.

The minister mentioned that several items were being imported under the category of "Others" making it difficult to determine the standards which apply to them. He announced that the Department of Commerce would soon issue a notification banning imports under the category of "Others". Henceforth, a special licence would be required to import goods under this category.

The session was moderated by Chandrajit Banerjee, director-general, CII.