

# Non-tariff barriers: Govt readies steps to ease exporters' woes

Sets up panel, identifies challenges, to launch portal soon

SHREYA NANDI

New Delhi, 14 July

ILLUSTRATION: AJAY MOHANTY

**T**he government is working towards a strategy to tackle non-tariff barriers faced by exporters by setting up a committee and launching a portal, a senior official said.

Typically, non-tariff barriers take several years to resolve. The development comes at a time when India is negotiating free-trade agreements (FTAs) with several developed economies, where non-tariff measures related to environment and sustainability have become a cause for concern for Indian exporters. During a recent review meeting, exporters had urged Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal to develop a strategy to tackle non-tariff barriers imposed by trade partners that hinder India's exports.

In international trade, barriers faced by exporters and importers may not be limited to the imposition of tariffs or duties. Non-tariff barriers, such as documentation procedures, certification, inspections of goods, standards, import restrictions, prohibitions, seasonal duties, tariff rate quotas, and public procurement practices, are seen discriminatory against imports.

"A committee has been set up to look at the barriers. Sometimes, resolving non-tariff barriers requires improvements or changes from our (India's) side, and at times, engagement with trade partners. The government is trying to find out the best way forward to resolve the issues," the official said.

The official said the committee would do a



## IN THE PIPELINE

- ▶ Move comes days after exporters flagged concerns with minister
- ▶ Non-tariff measures on environment and sustainability in FTA negotiations a cause for concern for exporters
- ▶ Portal will allow exporters to report barriers and identify if they are WTO-compliant
- ▶ Will help in tracking history and chronology of the barriers

detailed analysis and try to understand whether a regulation imposed by the trade partner is compliant with the rules of the World Trade Organization (WTO) or whether India has objected to it in the past. "(It will also determine) whether the matter is WTO-compliant, other countries are complying with the norms, and if we (India) can tweak our system to deal with the challenge," the official told *Business Standard*. Turn to Page 5 ▶

# Govt collating data to resolve trade issues

The government has identified 100-200 non-tariff barriers and is collating trade data. The plan is to launch an online portal over the next few months, the official said.

The portal will allow exporters to report non-tariff barriers and identify if they are WTO-compliant and if it's a company-specific issue or being faced by multiple exporters. The committee will then deliberate on the steps to intervene, the official said.

The portal will also help in tracking the history and the chronology of the barriers and the number of times they have been discussed

with trade partners.

Ajay Sahai, director general and chief executive officer at the Federation of Indian Export Organisations, said the committee was extremely important because the exporters were not aware of these kinds of non-tariff barriers.

“The panel will provide a platform where these issues can be brought to the notice. It then can constructively engage, either at the bilateral or multilateral level, to see how these can be addressed.

Domestic industries will be asked to make necessary improvements,” Sahai said.

