



# 'India ready to submit formal proposal on services to WTO'

Govt hopes its submission will be a key at next Ministerial

AMITI SEN

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India is ready to submit to the World Trade Organisation a formal proposal on trade facilitation in the services sector — which pushes for a liberal work-visa regime and totalisation pacts among other measures — as the process of legal vetting of the document is over.

New Delhi will try to ensure that a trade facilitation agreement (TFA) on services, on the lines of the TFA in goods agreed upon three years ago in Bali, is among the key deliverables at the eleventh Ministerial meet of the WTO in Argentina next year, said Nirmala Sitharaman, Minister for Commerce & Industry.

"While other countries are pushing their own agendas for the eleventh WTO Ministerial meet next year, it is not as if we are just sitting and watching them. Much before any country

had said anything on any issue, we said that we want an agreement on services in the next Ministerial. A lot of work is going on in the area. The legal vetting of our proposal has already happened and now we will send it back to the WTO for discussion," Sitharaman told *BusinessLine*.

## 'Implement Doha agenda'

The Minister said that while India will insist on the implementation of the Doha Development Agenda, talks were also taking place on the new work that WTO should do. "The moment we talk about new work, we get into this jargonised trap of issues such as e-commerce, government procurement, etc. We are telling the WTO that the nature of global trade now is such that there is a need to emphasise more on services," the Minister said. In the last Ministerial meeting of



Commerce Minister Nirmala Sitharaman

the World Trade Organisation in December 2015, many developed countries, led by the US, wanted curtains to be drawn on the on-going Doha Round and new issues to be tak-

en up instead at the multilateral forum.

India and many other developing countries resisted the attempt arguing that the Doha Round was a development

round with internalised benefits for developing countries and should not be abandoned.

In the concept note circulated at the WTO in September, India said the TFS agreement could be based on the TFA in goods, with suitable modification and adaptation to the services context, as required.

The scope of the proposed TFS agreement will cover cross-cutting measures across all the four modes of supply under the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) and will include special and differential treatment provisions for developing and poorest countries like in the TFA, it added.

While the concept note was only a framework for the final proposal that India will circulate now, the US has already found faults with it.

It reportedly said that the special and differential treatment for developing countries proposed by India could only result in longer implementation periods and not new concessions.