

EXPLAINED: Central government's 'One Country, One Standard' push

Sep 13, 2019 | | ET Now Digital

Consumer Affairs Minister Ram Vilas Paswan said the purpose of setting standards and enforcing them is not to bring back "inspector raj" but to ensure that quality products are made available to consumers.



Consumer Affairs Minister Ram Vilas Paswan (Source: PIB)

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- Paswan emphasised that having uniform national standards will help in making it mandatory for more products
- Paswan urged all stakeholders to provide all their suggestions in this regard by September 17, 2019
- BIS Deputy Director General Rajesh Bajaj said the completion of entire process will depend on how soon other agencies are willing to converge with the BIS. Consumer Affairs Minister Ram Vilas Paswan on September 12 said that the Centre was seriously working on implementing the 'One nation, one standard' to ensure quality products and services to consumers. "Like 'one nation, one ration card', we are going to have 'one nation, one standard' in order to ensure quality products in the country," Paswan said while briefing media after chairing a meeting on this issue with senior officials of the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS). The BIS, the only national body that frames standards, has come out with more than 20,000 standards for various products and services so far. Besides this, there are about 50-odd agencies that have framed about 400 standards in the country.

Talking about the multiple standards in the country for single product/service, Paswan said the purpose is to converge such standards with the BIS.

Saying that the BIS frames standards and cannot regulate its implementation, the consumer affairs minister added that the department concerned should monitor the process or a

separate regulator needs to be set up, an idea which has been mooted by the government think tank Niti Aayog.

Paswan also emphasised that having uniform national standards will help in making it mandatory for more products. He also hinted at making hallmarking of gold jewellery mandatory before Diwali so that consumers get genuine jewellery. The consumer affairs department has asked the commerce ministry to make it binding for jewellers to hallmark 14-carat, 18-carat and 22-carat gold jewellery before Diwali, Paswan added.

According to a PIB press release, Paswan urged all stakeholders to provide all their suggestions in this regard by September 17, 2019. The union minister also said that the purpose of setting standards and enforcing them is not intended to bring back the "inspector raj" but to ensure that quality products are made available for all consumers across the country.

The government also proposes to set Indian standards in line with the global benchmarks, just like other countries enforce their standards on imported products. The Centre, through this move, wants foreign goods coming into India to comply with Indian standards.

Elaborating on the issue, Consumer Affairs Secretary Avinash K Srivastava said different departments have their own standards and added, for example, the Food Safety and Standards Authority (FSSAI) has set standards on food, while Automobile Research Organisation of India regulates standards for the automobile sector.

"These standards need to be converged with BIS and redesignate them as one. This will help in easy implementation and monitoring of standards," Srivastava said.

Speaking on the proposed move, BIS Deputy director-general Rajesh Bajaj said the completion of the entire process will depend on how soon other agencies are willing to converge with the national standard framing body.

"Once they are ready, their standard will be redesignated. For example, if FSSAI converges its standards, then its products would be known as BIS/FSSAI," Bajaj added.

Replying to a question on setting up of regulator to monitor implementation of the standards, Bajaj said the Niti Aayog had suggested a separate regulator for each sector and this needs to be deliberated further.