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Commerce Minister to hold meeting with export bodies

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First interaction after the Budget to discuss exporters' woes



Nirmala Sitharaman, Commerce Minister
New Delhi, March 27:

Worried about exports falling two years in a row, Commerce and Industry Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will hold a meeting with export bodies, including export promotion councils, next week to assess the situation and see if there is a need for further government intervention.

“The meeting with exporters has been tentatively scheduled for April 5. The Minister wants to meet representatives from all important sectors to get their assessment of the global situation and see if the government can do anything to improve the situation,” a Ministry official said.

This is the first interaction that Sitharaman has scheduled with exporters after the Union Budget, which did not come up with anything specific for the sector. Over the past few months, exporters have sought a number of measures, such as extension of the Merchandise Export from India Scheme to more items, countries and also merchant exporters from identified sectors.

Those importing capital goods at reduced import duties under the Export Promotion Capital Goods Scheme have asked for a longer time period to meet their export obligation under the scheme due to falling exports. “All such demands will be examined in the meeting,” the official said.

Exports in the current fiscal will be around \$260 billion, according to estimates made by exporters’ body FIEO. This is about \$50 billion short of exports worth \$310 billion in 2014-15 and \$314 billion in 2013-14.

Interestingly, fall in exports is not just spread across products such as engineering goods, agricultural produce, petroleum products and leather goods, but also across regions. In the first 10 months of the current fiscal, India’s exports to Europe and the US fell by nearly 12 per cent, Africa by 26 per cent, Asia by 19 per cent and CIS & Baltics by 32 per cent.

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