



India Tightens Footwear Rules to Curb Toxic Chemicals, Aid Exports Push

Source By : Compiled News
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(Content)

India has tightened chemical safety norms in the footwear sector, with the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) issuing voluntary standards to detect hazardous substances in footwear materials. The move signals a broader effort by the world's second-largest footwear maker to align with global benchmarks while strengthening consumer protection.

According to a BIS notification, the new norms prescribe test methods to measure the presence of dimethylformamide (DMF) and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), respectively. Both substances are commonly used in footwear manufacturing and can pose health risks with prolonged exposure.

DMF is widely used as a solvent in the production of polyurethane-based synthetic leather and components. It can be absorbed through the skin and has been linked to liver toxicity.

PAHs are typically found in rubber and plastic parts such as soles, and some compounds in this group are known to cause cancer.

Trade experts said that the notification is part of a wider effort to harmonize Indian standards with global regulations, particularly in export markets such as the European Union (EU) where limits on such chemicals are stringent.

"The absence of standardized testing protocols has often been cited as a barrier for Indian exporters, as compliance requirements differ across jurisdictions," said Mr. Abhash Kumar, trade economist.

Earlier, the footwear industry did not have a uniform method to test hazardous substances such as DMF and PAHs, leading to variations in results across laboratories.

By aligning with the norms of the Geneva-based International Organization for Standardization (ISO), BIS has now introduced standardized testing protocols, which manufacturers may need to adopt to ensure consistency and global comparability of test results.

With BIS rolling out new norms, manufacturers will now need to follow uniform ISO-based testing protocols, using defined methods for sample

preparation, chemical extraction, & analysis, including techniques such as gas chromatography-mass spectrometry.

Globally, regulations such as the EU's Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH) prescribe strict limits on hazardous substances in products with prolonged skin contact. For instance, several PAHs are restricted to very low concentrations, typically around 1 mg/kg, while solvents like DMF are also tightly controlled.

The government's move is significant for India's \$2.6 billion footwear market. It also assumes importance as the government seeks to boost footwear exports, which rose to \$2.55 billion in FY25 from \$2.49 billion in FY24.

- Source: Mint 2026



"NATURE DOES NOT HURRY YET
EVERYTHING IS ACCOMPLISHED."
-LAO TZU

India's Digital Commerce Set for a \$250 Billion Leap

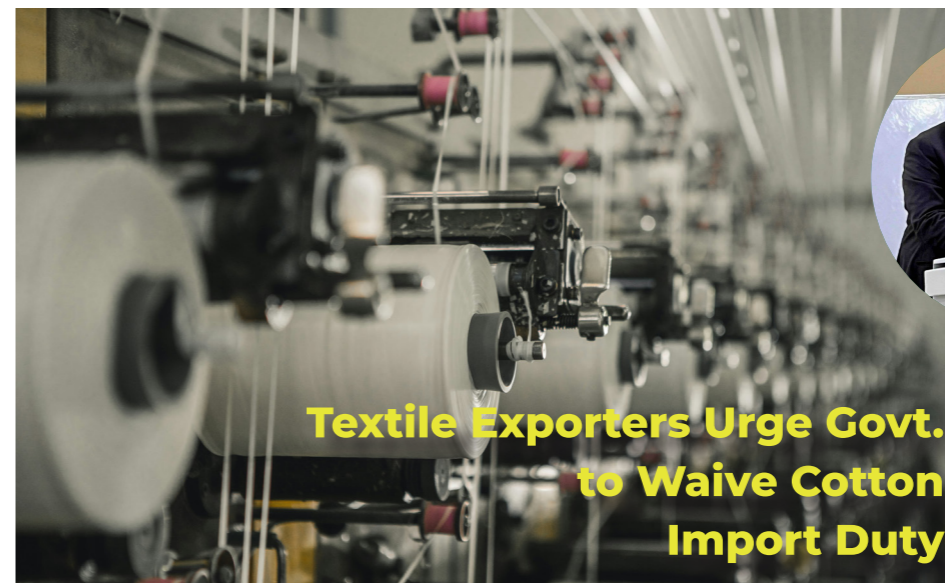
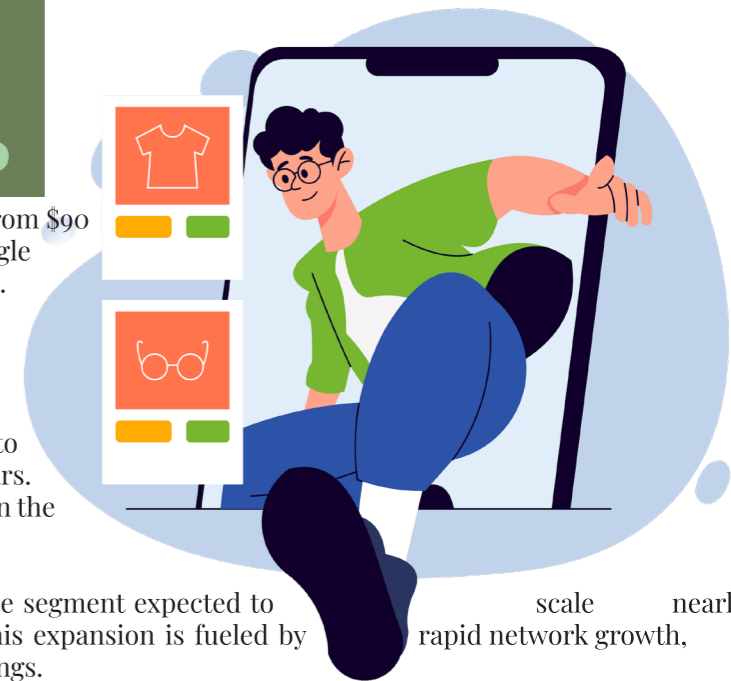
India's digital commerce ecosystem is projected to grow from \$90 billion today to \$250 billion by 2030, according to the Google and Deloitte "The \$250 Billion Commerce Frontier" report. This growth is being driven by emerging channels such as quick commerce, Gen Z consumers, and AI-led shopping experiences.

Gen Z, estimated at 220 million consumers, is expected to account for nearly 45% of online spending in the coming years. Additionally, around 150 million new shoppers are likely to join the digital economy, further expanding the consumer base.

Quick commerce is set to be a major growth driver, with the segment expected to sixfold, from \$7-8 billion in 2025 to \$50 billion by 2030. This expansion is fueled by increased dark store penetration, and broader product offerings.

The number of quick commerce users is projected to double from 32-34 million in 2025 to 65-70 million by 2030, as convenience-driven shopping becomes mainstream.

Notably, non-grocery categories such as electronics and fashion are gaining traction, contributing nearly 45% of total quick commerce spending. Much of this growth is being led by Tier II cities, signaling deeper market penetration beyond metros.



Textile Exporters Urge Govt. to Waive Cotton Import Duty

Textile and garment exporters have urged the government to remove the 11% import duty on cotton, as a recent surge in domestic prices has eroded margins and hurt their competitiveness in over-seas markets. Local cotton prices have risen 7-8% over the past month, driven by a sharp increase in demand as costlier crude oil pushed up prices of synthetic fibres, prompting mills to shift back to natural inputs.

The industry is seeking a temporary relief on the lines of the one granted last year, when the government waived cotton import duties between August and December to ease supply pressures. The prices of ginned cotton have increased 11-12% over the past one month, as per data from the Cotton Association of India. International cotton prices have risen 12-15% during this period, as cotton was the cheapest agricultural commodity available to investors, said industry experts.

For the export of textiles and garments, India depends on imported long-staple and contamination-free cotton, as demanded by overseas buyers. "Prices of almost all raw materials have gone up. However, as about 60-70% of the textile value chain depends on cotton we have requested the central government to waive the import duty on cotton for three-six months," said Chandrima Chatterjee, Secretary General, Confederation of Indian Textile Industries.



Sanjay Gupta Takes charge of CLE Components Panel

Strengthening its focus on the upstream ecosystem, the Council for Leather Exports (CLE) has nominated Mr. Sanjay Gupta as Convenor of the Components and Allied Panel, reinforcing alignment across critical input segments of the leather and footwear value chain. He currently serves as the President of the Indian Footwear Components Manufacturers Association (IFCOMA).

Mr. Gupta brings extensive industry experience and a sharp understanding of component manufacturing, sourcing, and supply chain dynamics. His company, Sandeep Rubbers, is a key industry supplier, providing soles to a wide spectrum of footwear manufacturers across the sector. His appointment comes as the industry sharpens its focus on scale, quality, and global competitiveness particularly in components that significantly influence finished product value.

As Convenor, Mr. Gupta is expected to foster deeper collaboration among manufacturers, drive innovation in materials, and strengthen India's positioning within global supply chains, while advancing policy advocacy, standardisation and export growth in the components segment.