

India won't Accept Unfair Trade: Nirmala

Our Bureau

New Delhi: Raising concerns on stricter visa regimes put in place by the US, the UK, Australia and New Zealand that would hinder easy movement of professionals to these countries, commerce and industry minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Thursday that India will not accept such unfair trade practices and called it a right time to have a global framework for services trade.

"Countries are now very clearly raising protectionist walls as

regards service trade. And it is time that we have a global framework within which trade in services can happen.

"We will be actively pursuing our proposal in the WTO," she said at an event here.

The minister said that restrictions are being imposed on movement of professionals and they are being equated with migrants who are asylum seekers.

India has suggested multiple entry visas for those who meet the host country's immigration criteria in a proposal on cross-border movement of services and asked such countries to rely

on the companies employing workers to judge their competence as it looks to build a global consensus on cross-border business workers.

Talking about the executive order signed by US President Donald Trump on H1B visas, Sitharaman said Washington has committed certain number of these visas to India and "we would definitely want" America to honour that commitment.

On whether India would drag the US and Australia to the WTO's dispute resolution mechanism for imposing such measures, the commerce minister

said: "At this stage, we will engage constructively. At the same time, India will ensure that it will not accept unfair treatment."

Stating that currency fluctuations have become the new normal, she said there is a need to focus on other factors like infrastructure and raw material cost to enhance export competitiveness. "It is just not the currency which gives you the competitiveness ...there are other factors which are equally critical for our exporters like infrastructure, raw material cost, energy supplies, state restrictions," she said.