



Ref. No.: 3177/1/50

15th April, 2021

Shri Piyush Goyal
Hon'ble Minister for Commerce
Government of India
New Delhi

Dear Shri Piyush Goyal Ji,

Subject : E Commerce business operations in non essential items under Covid guidelines

At the outset we would like to extend our deep appreciation for the way the Government is proactively dealing with this unprecedented crisis due to Covid and trying its best to ensure safety and security of every Indian Citizen. We as an apex body of the business community of the Country representing more than 8 crore traders through more than 40 thousand trade associations stands in solidarity with the Government in this hour of crisis and like last year's lockdown, we offer our services to join hands with the Government in fight against covid pandemic.

We convey our deep appreciation for allowing the sale and delivery of essential commodities both by the physical shops as also through e-commerce business. However we have learnt from media reports that several e-commerce companies individually and through their lobby groups are not happy with the covid guidelines in operations and are trying to pressurise the Government to allow sale and delivery of non-essential goods in the area where curfew or lockdown has been clamped.

It is shocking that few of the prominent players in e-commerce are trying to dislodge the physical traders from the market by asking permission for selling non essentials through e-commerce in different states and themselves and through their lobby groups have activated to represent them with the Government. We take a strong note of it and want to make it very clear to the Government that if e-commerce companies are allowed to sell non essentials than it will create an uneven level playing field for the traders whose shops will remain shut for compliance of the curfew orders whereas these companies will be allowed to sell goods through e-commerce. It will be a grave injustice to the traders of India and will de-motivate the traders. The sinister designs of these companies to take advantage of Corona pandemic is a shameful act and shows that they are least bothered for any pandemic or casualties and are more interested in spreading wings of their business on the coffin of the people.

It is also to be mentioned that at a time when all other shops except essential items are under lockdown or curfew, then as to how the e-commerce portals will be able to deliver the non essential goods since they are pure market place and are not allowed to own any inventory and the traders registered with them as sellers won't be in a position to deliver the goods due to remain under lockdown. If still, the e-commerce portals are delivering the goods that effectively means that they are not the market place and holding inventory much against the FDI policy of the Government.

You are well aware of the effort and the commitment shown by the small retailers of India in serving the nation in such unfriendly circumstances risking their lives and putting the benefit of the society before self by ensuring smooth running of supply chain of essential goods across Country despite facing several roadblocks and hurdles. When the Covid-19 lockdown was announced, India's small retailers like true Corona Warriors, fearlessly stepped out of their houses to fulfill the requirements of essentials throughout the country whereas the large E-commerce giants decided to shut shop and quietly disappeared. It will be highly unfair if the E-commerce players are allowed to deliver all kinds of goods whereas Brick and Mortar retailers are allowed to deal only in essential commodities. This will create further imbalance in the level playing field and give rise to unnecessary conflicts.

We request your urgent and immediate intervention in this matter and we are hopeful that you will ensure quick resolution of this significant controversial issue in the larger interest of trade and traders of India.

Thank you. With kind regards

Yours truly

Praveen Khandelwal

National Secretary General

Contact Cell : +91-9891015165.

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