

Press Release

MSMEs to benefit as Defence canteens to start e-commerce: Vyapar seminar

Kochi, June 18: The Union government is in an “advanced stage” of activating e-commerce facilities at its Canteen Stores Department (CSD) for online purchase of the goods by its beneficiaries associated with the defence services, a top official revealed at Vyapar 2022 that concluded today.

A meeting of the CSD Board on July 1 will near-finalise the move to set up the digital platform even as the 34 brick-and-mortar depots will continue to function as usual, according to Major General Y.P. Khanduri, General Manager of CSD, which functions under the Ministry of Defence. Either way, it will boost MSMEs, as micro, small and medium industries form a chunk of CSD’s business partners (251 out of the total 555).

The move to let CSD outlets simultaneously go online comes in the wake of two years of Covid-19 that restricted physical movements and left a long backlog in supplies, the senior military officer told a seminar at the June 16-18 business-to-business meet organized here by the Kerala Department of Industries and Commerce.

“Social distancing protocols that came in since the spread of the pandemic in March 2020 inconvenienced our personnel and pensioners totalling 45 lakh across the country. They could not appear at the canteens,” Maj Gen Khanduri recalled in his power-point presentation at JLN International Stadium Ground on Friday night. “Liquor, though, can be accessed only physically from the CSD canteen as the product involves GST payments at the state level.”

The upcoming e-commerce facility will thus enable CSD cardholders to buy groceries and other general items from the defence canteens. “The platform will cater to the beneficiaries across India and the e-bookings will be 24/7,” the speaker said at his 30-minute lecture on ‘Purchase Protocols’ as part of the symposium at Vyapar 2022 which sought to invigorate Kerala’s pandemic-hit MSME units by hosting a products expo that mirrored their technological competence.

The canteens, which typically sell FMCG items, household requisites, watches and stationeries, food and medicines besides liquor and general items, are set for a timely streamlining so as to quicken up the disbursal of undelivered orders, Maj Gen Khanduri said, throwing light on CSDs with 2,000 people on its payrolls while giving indirect employment to 10,000 others.

To a question, the officer said CSD does not supply items that require freezer storage, as the goods have also reach the farthest parts of the country. "That's also why we don't sell commodities with a shelf-life of less than six months," he added, citing reasonable price backed by strict financial control and efficient supply-chain management as the highlights of the canteens.

A subsequent presentation by the Directorate of Industries (DIC) informed that around 14,000 MSME units have registered in Kerala so far during 2022-23, which is being observed as the Year of Entrepreneurs. More than RS 100 crores will be disbursed as subsidy in the current financial year. Also, 2,195 MSMEs have obtained licences through K-SWIFT, while 22,206 others have been issued acknowledgement certificates, Shri P.A. Najeeb, General Manager (DIC), Ernakulam told the seminar.

The administration has envisaged MSME Clinics as a mechanism to address the doubts and concerns of entrepreneurs, he added.

Earlier on Friday evening, Shweta Baravani, Program Manager of Amazon's Karigar and Saheli, spoke about the procurement procedures of the India chapter of the US e-commerce giant.