

Small trader's upbeat as West Bengal allows home delivery of non-essential items

KOLKATA, APRIL 28 /--/ Small traders and businesses were upbeat on Tuesday after the West Bengal government allowed home delivery of non-essential items, saying the decision would help ease their financial woes which have been spiralling due to the ongoing lockdown.

There was apprehension among the traders that the lockdown may get further extended which would have multiplied their losses.

"We are hopeful after the chief minister's announcement. We want that the government allows us to deliver goods to client locations without opening our shops or godowns. This will be a win-win situation. The government can implement social distancing, and livelihood of lakhs can be saved," Confederation of West Bengal Trade Unions president Sushil Poddar said. Small traders know their clients personally and they can transact easily over the phone without meeting each other, but the delivery of goods has to happen, he said.

"Moreover, the government needs to broaden its definition of essential items. Even a goods carriage motor part becomes an essential item if the vehicle engaged in transporting essential goods faces breakdown," he said. Poddar said he awaits a clear mandate on the matter.

The parent trade body, having 10 lakh members, wrote to the state government after the Centre recently announced certain relaxations on the opening of shops.

Confederation of All India Traders (West Bengal) general secretary Rabi Shankar Roy said they will wait till the final guidelines are published and will then

comment. Many traders fear that if the benefit of the decision goes to e-commerce companies then it would be more fatal for small businesses, he said.

The Retailers Association of India (RAI) that represents large retailers said all types of stores should be allowed to operate, including those in the neighbourhoods.

As RAI, we believe that to fulfil consumer needs in these trying times, rules for direct customer delivery need to be broad-based," its chief executive officer Kumar Rajagopalan said.

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee announced on Monday the state government's decision to allow home delivery of non-essential items, in a boost to the businesses, and also easing lives of people.

After a slump in business from brick and mortar stores during the Covid-19 induced lockdown, an organization of traditional small traders on Wednesday claimed that it would launch an e-commerce portal for essentials "in a day or two" in association with its partners.

An official of the Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) that represents seven crore traders and 40,000 trade associations said the project aims at delivering essential items to the doorstep of a customer by a neighbourhood store.

"A pilot has been going on in six cities of Allahabad, Delhi, Jhansi, Varanasi, Gorakhpur, Lucknow for the past seven days involving around 800 local traders. We are planning a pan-India launch with a target of involving one lakh traders and stores in a day or two," CAIT West Bengal general secretary Rabi Shankar Roy said. (PTI)