



Free Trade Agreements Create New Opportunities for MSMEs to Integrate into Global Supply Chains: Union Minister of State for Commerce and Industry Shri Jitin Prasada

Quality-Led Growth Critical as 65% of Developed Markets Covered Under India's FTAs: Shri Jitin Prasada

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Union Minister of State for Commerce and Industry and Electronics and Information Technology, Shri Jitin Prasada, addressed the FICCI FLO National MSME Awards Ceremony, highlighting the role of Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) in expanding opportunities for India's Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). He stated that recent FTAs with regions including the European Union, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand and other major markets provide Indian MSMEs with access to a large share of developed markets, creating significant opportunities for Indian manufacturers to integrate into global supply chains and meet international demand.

Shri Prasada emphasised that MSMEs, which form the backbone of the Indian economy, should focus on strengthening India's journey towards quality-led growth. He noted that the sector must shift from scale and low-cost manufacturing to quality-driven production. Referring to the fact that nearly 65 per cent of developed markets are part of India's FTAs, he stated that these markets demand high-quality products and that Indian consumers, including those in rural areas with digital access, are increasingly aspiring for better quality goods. He added that zero duty access does not imply that sub-standard products can enter the Indian market.

Highlighting the importance of technology adoption, the Minister stated that Artificial Intelligence (AI) is emerging as a critical tool across industries including healthcare, transportation, manufacturing and services. He encouraged MSMEs to adopt AI-driven technologies to improve productivity, efficiency and decision-making, while reducing the burden of routine operational tasks.

Chairman and Managing Director of the National Small Industries Corporation (NSIC), Dr Subhransu Sekhar Acharya, emphasised the importance of promoting women-led development through targeted support, digital empowerment, and skill development initiatives. He highlighted the Trade Enablement & Marketing (TEAM) initiative promoted by NSIC, which aims to onboard five lakh MSMEs onto the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) platform, with a target that 50 per cent of these enterprises should be women-led.

National President, FICCI Ladies Organisation (FLO), Ms. Poonam Sharma, highlighted the growing role of women entrepreneurs in driving economic growth. She noted that across sectors—from startups to space, and from manufacturing to technology—women are emerging as significant drivers of innovation

and economic activity. She emphasised that MSMEs play a vital role in employment generation, innovation and strengthening local economies, with women-led MSMEs contributing to inclusive development.

Ms. Sharma also highlighted the initiatives of FICCI FLO aimed at strengthening women's economic participation and leadership. As the women's wing of FICCI, FLO works towards empowering women through skill development, entrepreneurship support, policy advocacy and leadership mentoring. She noted that the FLO MSME Assist Cell has been established to provide a comprehensive support ecosystem for women-led MSMEs.

The Assist Cell connects women entrepreneurs with industry experts, mentors and specialists across key areas including funding, marketing, expansion strategies, technology adoption and business skill development. The initiative aims to enable women entrepreneurs not only to establish businesses but also to scale and sustain them successfully.

During the ceremony, eleven women MSME entrepreneurs were presented awards in recognition of their contributions. The event was also attended by Member of Parliament Shri Anurag Sharma, Head of FLO MSME Initiatives Ms. Ruby Garg and several past Presidents of FICCI Ladies Organisation.

Abhishek Dayal/Shabbir Azad/Anushka Pandey

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