Learn 'art of living' with coronavirus: Union Minister Nitin Gadkari

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Union Minister Nitin Gadkari on Saturday suggested retailers to learn the "art of living" with the coronavirus pandemic while assuring them to look into their demands for MSME status.

The minister also assured the retailers to look into their demands of financial aid from the government, which he would put forward to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. He also said that some proposals are under "serious consideration" by the government and asked the retail industry to have a positive outlook. "We would have to develop a way forward to live with coronavirus," said Gadkari in a virtual meeting with the Retailers Association of India (RAI).

He also assured RAI and Practicing Engineers, Architects and Town Planners Association (India) that their request for registering as MSMEs will be examined expeditiously.

"These people (retailers) also provide employment to some people and if they get recognition as MSME, then people working under them would get benefits as Atal Pension Yojana, health insurance and others. They would also have a Jan Dhan Yojana account. They would benefit from schemes for the social sector. Moreover, several women work with them," the minister said.

According to him, several small retailers have already got permission to open their shops and soon large retailers would also get permission from the state governments. "As this is a matter of survival for your industry, the government has asked for refund of Income Tax and GST within eight days," he said.

According to the minister, the present situation is also a "blessing in disguise" and an opportunity to upgrade the expertise of the retail industry and suggested them to optimise their cost. He also suggested the retailers to learn "art of living" with coronavirus and said that retailers' patience in the sector is getting exhausted. "This is also an economic war. In the international market, our quality and cost matters," he said.

Gadkari also stressed that the retailer would have to develop a procedure against coronavirus to sanitise the hands of customers and employees and maintain social distance by marking steps in the retail shops. "Fight against corona would take time but decisions regarding stores are expected," he said adding "gradually we would have to start daily needs, (otherwise) survival of the poor would be difficult."

The minister has also asked RAI to send their memorandum which he would forward to the finance minister, who has the authority to decide over the issue. "We are standing with you. We would try to maximise the help," he said, adding that he is constantly in touch with the Prime Minister and Finance Minister.

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