

100% WFH: Goyal

Our Bureau

New Delhi: Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Tuesday said that the government is considering allowing 100% work from home for employees of units in special economic zones (SEZ).

At present, work from home is permitted for a maximum period of one year in an SEZ unit and can be extended to 50% of the total employees.

“We had permitted work from home in SEZ units during Covid times. It was appreciated by all and it also helped in pushing our services exports which were \$254 billion last year. This year also there will be a jump in that,” Goyal said after the Board of Trade meeting.

The commerce department has notified Rule 43A for WFH in the SEZ Rules, 2006, which provides WFH for a certain category of employees of a unit in an SEZ. These include employees of IT/ITeS SEZ units, employees who are temporarily incapacitated, or are travelling or are working offsite. The government has already kick-started the process to replace the SEZ Act with legislation to set up Development of Enterprise and Service Hubs (DESH).

The minister said that the government has received requests from several quarters that there are still

Covid-related restrictions at several places in different countries and people are not coming to offices.

Noting that work from home can help in creating job opportunities in smaller cities like Rajkot and Una, he said: "It is in the interest of the country to allow work from home" and that it would be for all sectors in SEZs.

Participating in the Board of Trade meeting, EEPIC India Chairman Mahesh Desai proposed to withdraw export duty on selected steel items as it will be especially helpful for the MSMEs which have a significant contribution in India's engineering exports. He also suggested cheaper advances for MSMEs, a dedicated PLI scheme for the MSME sector, guidelines for Rupee trade with Russia and alternative payment mechanisms for Myanmar.

LOGISTICS POLICY

Goyal said Prime Minister Narendra Modi will release the national logistics policy on September 17, which is aimed at promoting seamless movement of goods across the country.

The policy is expected to focus on several areas such as process re-engineering, digitisation, and multi-modal transport. In 2020, the government, in the budget, had announced that it will soon release the national logistics policy.