

Inaugural Speech of A. K. Sharma
On his taking over as Secretary MSME
Government of India
on 30th April, 2020

Thank you for welcoming me.

I am really happy to be with you all in the MSME family.

I have heard many previous speakers.

There is one common thing in all speeches.

Many of you have said one thing so I am going to talk about it.

In any case, I wanted to take this opportunity to set our future agenda.

Friends! You should not feel that you are in a small or low profile ministry or in a neglected job.

This thought could have come in my mind also.

But when I considered it I find that MSME Sector is a very big sector.

There are 6-7 Crore MSME units

If we include the number of workers, vendors and family members dependent upon them, approximately 30 crore people directly or indirectly depend upon MSMEs.

This means that almost One fourth or one fifth of national population depends on this sector.

The people who depend on small business or industrial units are generally marginalized people. Many of them make their bread somehow. Today, they are in even bigger distress. You must be seeing news items in TV that many of those small owners, workers and vendors have no means to make their two meals.

Currently, we are passing through the biggest socio economic challenge not only of India or the world but perhaps the biggest challenge of human civilization. In this moment of crisis, there cannot be a bigger task than Protecting life or Livelihood of those who are already on the margins. We should feel happy about this opportunity.

So, take my words, you are not in a low profile job...

Now, for this situation and this sector I have to say something more.

I have three Urgent things in my mind:

1. The first and foremost is to Protect the backbone of the units and entrepreneurs. Ridh Ki haddi Bachi rahegi to phir se khade ho jayengey;
2. The second is that we have to see that they sail through this time and jobs and livelihoods are not affected beyond a point;
3. The third thing is to use this crisis as opportunity. We should focus on finding new opportunities in national and international market. I have been working in one of the covid management groups formed by the Government. This empowered group is for procurement of medical equipments for covid crisis. I was shocked to learn in the beginning that there is no capacity in the country to produce simple items like PPE or Masks. These are not very technical or scientific items. But still we had to depend entirely on imports. Equally surprising was that with little effort, after our group put some dots together, today just in two three weeks, we have started producing more than one lakh PPEs daily in the country. So we can do anything and everything. We have to just bring certain players and processes together.

Friends! After we have dealt with this urgent situation, once crisis is over, I have to work on my passion. I have come here with a mission.

And that Mission is: Creating Global Champion companies from MSMEs.

In this very room, in the very premises of MSME clusters, through your very able hands, I want to grow apple. (Not this (eatable) apple but that apple-Phone).

Friends! Honestly, I am here with a mission to create a few Apples. A few Googles. I want Microsoft kind of companies to come up in India. .

You must have heard the discussion many times Why can't India create them.

You may be aware that apple started from a garage. At some Point of time Mercedes, Airbus or IKEA also must have been SMEs as per definition in those countries.

McDonald and star bucks also must have been SMEs earlier. Today, you know their revenue, valuation and market cap.

Friends! Believe me a country's economy is as robust as its companies.

You may be aware what kind of contribution to GDP is made by a handful of companies in many rich economies.

You also may be knowing that over 90 percent of global wealth is in the hands of three percent individuals.

How it has happened?

It has happened through their companies which they thoughtfully created.

So we have to work in this direction.

But for now, we have to work hard with a sense of urgency.

We cannot relax.

How can we sleep or relax when lacks and lacks of people along with their small children are about to sleep without food.

So starting right from now, each one of us, everyone among us, every person in this ministry will have two tasks:

One is on the urgent basis. And that is to see and watch every hour how can we save a unit from being closed. How can we save a job from being lost?

Honestly, I become restless when I see a person who was living a decent life has been suddenly thrown in a bad economic situation. We have to help them urgently.

Let us start doing this right from now.

I will be reviewing your contribution in this regards from tomorrow onwards.

The second and important task is to create new units every day and new jobs and job creators every hour.

Creating a successful MSME is a two way process: one process is to weave them around a big company. This is about creating ancillaries. This is a top down process.

The other process is bottoms up. We have to create and nurture all MSMEs and promote those who have the potential to become big company.

Friends! We have to be a country creating champion companies. That's our long term important task.

Friends the task before us is huge.

The task on our hands is both urgent and important.

That is why even before joining formally, I have started your work.

Last few days I have been in touch with some of you.

Friends! I repeat that I have come here with a passion.

The passion is to see this country producing world's biggest companies.

We have to create world beating companies.

At present our specific job here is to see our MSMEs reach to that category.

I pray God to give you and me the strength to do all this.

Wish you all the best.

Thank you.