

India mulls national e-commerce policy

India is considering drafting a comprehensive national e-commerce policy to develop an ecosystem that would support exports and protect consumer interests, said a senior government official.

However, the country is of the view that starting negotiations on World Trade Organisation (WTO) rules in e-commerce would be premature at this stage as it was still unclear how they would benefit developing nations, including their companies and consumers, said Sudhanshu Pandey, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

Addressing an interactive session on 'e-commerce, digital infrastructure, trade rules and WTO,' organised by industry body FICCI and Centre for WTO Studies, Mr. Pandey said several countries were enthusiastic about negotiating multilateral rules to govern international trade through e-commerce. However, such rules could hurt the interests of most developing countries, including India, he said, adding India needed time to study whether it was prepared to take on obligations that would bind its stakeholders to an international policy in a sector like e-commerce, which was still evolving.

He said the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) was working on a paper on e-commerce, which will soon be put in public domain for debates and comments. Inputs from the feedback could form the basis for a national e-commerce policy, he indicated.

Mr. Pandey said about 24 papers had been submitted to the WTO for international rule-making on e-commerce. India would also engage in discussions with other developing nations on the issue for support for its stance.

Global e-com market

Global e-commerce market was estimated at \$25 trillion of which trans-border component was a minuscule 5% — meaning the remaining 95% was domestic e-commerce trade, he said.

The size of the Indian e-commerce market was just \$30 billion, he said. Mr. Pandey said national rule-making for e-commerce was also a daunting task as there were many issues which were overlapping. Thus, the varied arms of the Centre were trying to address the issues pertaining to their domain to help in formulating an overarching national policy for e-commerce.

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