

Kalraj Mishra launches 'SWAYAM', a support cell for women entrepreneurs

Minister urges FLO to seek proposals through social media for women's start-ups

NEW DELHI, 10 September 2015: Mr. Kalraj Mishra, Union Minister for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, today exhorted **FICCI Ladies Organisation (FLO)** to seek proposals for starting enterprises by women entrepreneurs through the use of social media while urging the organizations to reach out to women's colleges for consultancy and mentoring of aspiring entrepreneurs in keeping with the Prime Minister's call for 'Start-up India, Stand-up India'.

Speaking at a function to launch '**SWAYAM**', a support cell for women entrepreneurs, organized by FLO here today, Mr. Mishra said, "I believe that unless we rekindle the spirit of entrepreneurship amongst women, the nation cannot progress." Therefore, it was imperative to encourage innovation and entrepreneurship which was ingrained in the youth of the country, he added.

FLO has created a Consultancy and Mentorship cell – SWAYAM-in all its chapters pan-India to provide support to new and existing women entrepreneurs as also aspiring student entrepreneurs, in establishing a new business and enhancing existing ones.

The primary objective of FLO is to promote entrepreneurship and professional excellence in women. SWAYAM is a step further in this direction and will play an important role of connecting women entrepreneurs to the right service providers. The aim is to expedite the processes for women entrepreneurs as also to provide them with the right solutions at a reasonable cost.

Mr. Mishra said that women embody the power that flows 'Saraswati' (learning), 'Lakshmi' (wealth) and 'Durga' (morality and righteousness). If this power can be harnessed for enterprise start-ups, a web of innovative enterprises would be spread all across the country, proving jobs to lakhs of needy people.

Apart from the launch of SWAYAM, the Minister also inaugurated the SWAYAM website. **Mr. Ravindra Nath, CMD, National Small Industries Corporation**, while quoting from a Dell Women's Global Entrepreneurship Study, said that the survey reveals optimism and opportunity for women-owned businesses in India. Women Business Owners in India are feeling confident anticipate a median growth of 90% over the next five years. This compared favorably with that of the US (50%) and the UK (24%).

Mr. Nath said that the time was ripe to build synergies between women entrepreneurs and NSIC whose mission was to assist entrepreneurs in availing of credit and marketing, technical and information support to small enterprises.

He offered the use of NSIC grounds free of cost for exhibiting the products made by women entrepreneurs promoted by FLO.

The **FLO President, Ms. Archana Garodia Gupta** said, “Mentorship and guidance is a tool that has the potential to help women entrepreneurs grow their businesses, and in some cases change their lives. The objective of SWAYAM is to link FLO women as mentors to women entrepreneurs in 15 locations Pan India. This linkage will facilitate finance, access to banking & government schemes and help identifying franchise opportunities for potential women entrepreneurs. Panels of mentors have been created for the support and guidance of women entrepreneurs across India.”

FLO has conceptualized and created this dynamic platform, for potential and existing women entrepreneurs to be benefitted from a wide array of mentors:

Business Mentors: A panel of FLO members who offer themselves as mentors at no charge, in the area of their profession, or in their industry vertical.

Honorary panelists: To provide consultancy on all legal requirements to start a business and subsequently for smooth functioning of the business after the start up.

Professional panelists: These will be professionals providing consultancy services to the applicants on their business requirements. A standard reasonable rate can be fixed up for their charges per quarter, based on a discount on prevailing rates in that city. The first round of consultation shall be free of charge.

Ms. Sucheta N Shah, National Coordinator of SWAYAM, gave details of the SWAYAM initiative, explaining the aims, objectives and modus operandi of the mentorship and guidance cell. On the occasion, a panel discussion on ‘Challenges Faced by Women Entrepreneurs’ was organized. The discussants were: **Ms. Ameera Shah, MD & CEO, Metropolis; Ms. Anisha Singh, CEO & Founder, Mydala.com** and **Ms. Sumita Ghose, Director, Rangсутra Crafts India Ltd.** The function was also addressed by **Ms. Khai UI Nissa - Director, Verbind (World Trade Centre)**, who explained how the organisation would support SWAYAM and **Ms. Vasvi Bharat Ram, Vice President, FLO.**

FICCI MEDIA DIVISION