

Soon, e-lockers may replace traditional ones at Manappuram Finance

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Mohan Vizhakat, Chief Technology Officer, Manappuram Finance

Move will provide greater security, open new avenues of business: CTO

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An Internet-based keyless, fully automated and secure e-lockers may soon replace the traditional lockers for gold storage at Manappuram Finance.

The e-lockers will be completely managed (opening, closing, auditing, remote monitoring etc) through encrypted IT systems.

The development of such an e-locker system is expected to benefit customers by providing greater security.

Mohan Vizhakat, Chief Technology Officer, Manappuram Finance, says that the gold loan business hinges on the 19th century technology of mechanical lockers for gold storing even though all other aspects of business have been modernised.

Hence developing an e-locker system is the need of the hour as manually operated lockers have certain vulnerabilities because of the need to open it frequently as well as threats to extract keys of the mechanical lockers, he said. The Kerala-based NBFC is developing such an advanced technology application solely with the aim of transforming the gold loan business.

He told *BusinessLine* that the e-locker system could further be developed to offer new products such as gold deposit services, online gold loans for customers, etc. The use of such cutting-edge technologies will make business transactions convenient and transparent.

Investment for research

Asked how e-lockers will benefit, Vizhakat said that it would help shrink the size of many conventional branches into small kiosks. This would reduce operating expenses and facilitate opening of more outlets at places where customers need immediate gold loans. For this transformation, the company has lined up investments worth ₹40 crore in R&D projects for developing Internet-based products. The usage of M2M (machine to machine) communications protocol will enable remote monitoring of gold stored inside e-lockers and even automated auditing through the centrally-controlled IT systems.

There are plans to put in place a biometric 'eKYC authentication system' allowing direct interface with UIDAI to establish the authenticity of the Aadhar cards presented at the branches. Steps are also on to launch 'e-wallet cards' to avoid cash transactions for customers who lack access to bank accounts.

To spearhead similar and future innovations, he said the company is setting up an entirely new institution – Manappuram Centre of Excellence and Innovation (MaCE Inn) – at Bengaluru.

Manappuram, which was recently awarded the KMA-Nasscom IT Innovations Award, was among the first NBFCs to build and operate an IT-system based on a centrally managed application.

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