

# Symposium

20th February, 2016

## Symposium on Positioning of North Eastern Region Handicrafts in Domestic and Overseas markets



Seen on the dais (L to R): Mr. S P Dadoo, President, Reception Committee, IHGF Delhi Fair - Spring 2016; Ms. Jesmina Zeliang, Regional Convenor(NER), EPCH; Mr. A M Singh, Joint Secretary, Ministry of DoNER; Dr. K Gopal, Development Commissioner (Handicrafts); Mr. Rakesh Kumar, Executive Director, EPCH; Mr. O P Prahladka, Regional Convenor(East), EPCH; Mr. Dhiraj Thakuria, Managing Director, North Eastern H & H Dev. Corp. Ltd.; and Mr. P J Aranador, International Designer, Philippines

The North Eastern Region of India with Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Sikkim, Nagaland and Tripura is projected towards comprehensive capacity enhancement, skill development, marketing and increase of employment opportunities, all aimed at improving livelihood of artisans of the region. This is being carried out by EPCH under the "North East Region Textile Promotion Scheme(NERTPS)" of the Ministry of Textiles, Govt. of India. To facilitate a panel discussion on upsizing the handicrafts industry in NER, EPCH organized a symposium on "Positioning of North Eastern Region Handicrafts in Domestic and Overseas Markets" on 20th February, 2016 at the India Expo Centre, in course of the IHGF Delhi Fair-Spring 2016. This symposium brought together expert speakers having wide experience in promotion of export of handicrafts from NER.



Mr. A M Singh  
Joint Secretary,  
Ministry of DoNER

Provision of sufficient capital and credit for small artisans and entrepreneurs and emphasis on marketing quotient....

The conference was initiated by Mr. A M Singh (IFS), who mainly focused on the appropriate commercial positioning of handicrafts of North-East. He spoke primarily on the question of why the North-East markets have not yet achieved domestic success, that is very much due, to them. He enumerated the two issues required to implement the successful exposure of handicraft products; provision of sufficient capital and credit for the small artisans and entrepreneurs; and the emphasis on marketing quotient. Further deliberation of these issues would help solve them, he said and added, in statistical terms, the domestic markets incur a loss of 100 crore rupees, due to inefficient marketing intelligence. So, one ought to take the strategies and implement them as soon as possible for better exposure towards foreign dealings.

The worldwide demand accentuates green and sustainable natural materials....

Mr. Rakesh Kumar, Executive Director of EPCH, then elaborated on the importance handicrafts of the North-East



Mr. Rakesh Kumar  
Executive Director, EPCH

region have gained over the years. He said, presently, importers are amazed at the uniqueness of these products so the demand for such assortments is on an increase. He added about the different kind of products made from bamboo, cane, silk, wood, terracotta, metal and jute that encompass a wide ranging product line from the region. Among

major weaknesses there is lack of variety in designs, there is overdependence on ethnic and religious art forms and there is much scope to gain from modern design inputs. Lack of modern marketing modes is also a big limiting factor for many.

Mr. Kumar pointed out that NER crafts confirm to the worldwide demand for green and sustainable natural materials (people-positive and planet positive). So, there ought to be creation of a manufacturing pool that caters to this market. Moreover, NER has products that fall into the ethnic category like Muga silk and Eri silk of Assam. Talking of the untapped potential of the domestic market in India, Mr. Kumar pointed out that, South East Asian countries like Philippines, Thailand and Indonesia that have good export markets have significant domestic demand as well. However, in our case, exports have seen increase from Rs. 386 crores to Rs. 20, 000 in two decades but our domestic market is still largely untapped. He also spoke of commercial viability of the products as well as usage of sales channels like retail and e-commerce. Finally, he stressed on establishment of the NER brand, with the implementation of alternative selling venues, such as airports and metros.

Leaner, cleaner and under-embellished design...



Mr. P J Aranador  
International Designer,  
Philippines

International lifestyle designer, P.J Aranador, spoke upon the two avenues for product development and design. This includes scope method, so as to understand the design in demand and the particular material usage, which includes a leaner, cleaner and under-embellished design. He displayed the innovative designs produced in

Philippines, including crazy weaves, utilitarian and vertebral design, modern tribal art forms, bi-colour combinations, storied crafts, patchwork and implementation of laser-cut technology in the handicraft industry. He also listed the top three seller categories from the North-East Region, including lighting; storage, bed and bath; and kitchen & dining. He stressed upon the fact that the future of handicrafts industry relies upon the application of product and design innovations.

Technological interventions, upgrades and capacity building for the grass root-level entrepreneurs....

Mr. O P Prahladka, Regional Convenor (East), EPCH shared about how EPCH has been passionate about the showcasing of



Mr. O P Prahladka  
Regional Convenor (East)  
and Member COA -EPCH

North-East handicrafts in its international shows like IHGF. Though most of their products cater to the domestic markets, there should be technological interventions, upgrades and capacity building for the grass root-level entrepreneurs. In other words, one ought to create entrepreneurs from the artisans to culminate in market growth. For the

near future, he suggested establishment of a warehouse and a showcasing facility in Kolkata, which would take care of the urgent need of collection and storage facilities, so as to cater to international demands. With the establishment of a brand and further sub-brands from the clusters, there has to be an added investment in the souvenir section and new production materials as well.

Visual presentation, detailing and branding to take NER crafts to new heights...

Mr. Dhiraj Thakuria, Managing Director, North Eastern H & H Dev. Corp. Ltd. emphasized upon the fact that one has to focus on the nomenclature and branding of the product before its positioning. He

added that there should be a promotional impetus to the current marketing strategies. With a relocation of smaller faculties in the artisans' villages rather than in towns, and an added emphasis on better visual presentation with product details, the creation of the North-East handicraft industry is bound to reach new heights in the coming years.



Mr. Dhiraj Thakuria  
Managing Director,  
North Eastern H & H Dev.  
Corp. Ltd.