

# Theme Pavilion - Sustainable crafts from NER

## Handloom, Silk and Sustainable Crafts from NER go multicolour!

Bamboo Crafts, Home Decoratives, Home Furnishings, Fashion Jewellery & Textiles  
Dry Flowers & Natural Fiber Products



bark, tea leaves onion skins, marigold petals, madder root and indigo. When these hues & threads are blended within intricate weaves & multiple densities, the fabric takes on a texture & transparency that is beautiful, sensual and sophisticated. "I am going to

make Eri silk carpets which will be first of a kind, but may be expensive for some", she shares speaking about the growing popularity of Eri-the 'ahimsa' silk and adds that Muga has its own demand, texture and fineness which is why many Asian buyers, especially the Japanese prefer it, but Eri enjoys good demand in European nations like Germany. For variations to

her existing home furnishings range, Shravanti is using techniques like screen printing and hand printing to embellish her lines with animal and bird motifs. Part of this range are her jute & linen cushion covers sporting images of endangered animals as a gesture of spreading awareness to protect and

With an aesthetically done central theme of natural fiber products, surrounded by individual participant stalls, the special showcase of crafts from India's North Eastern Region (NER) at IHGF Delhi Fair-Autumn 2016 featured products from India's sustainable raw materials rich states of Assam, Manipur, Tripura, Mizoram and Nagaland, represented by a team of 27 artisans and entrepreneurs as well as welfare organizations. This was beautifully curated with concept theme settings by leading Filipino lifestyle designer, PJ Aranador and his team.

**Shravanti Borah's passion for reviving the traditional silks of Assam, brought her into this field** and



her firm-Enajori that means 'the thread of love', took shape in Guwahati. She deals in Eri and Muga silk sarees, mekhla chadars and stoles as well as fabrics, home furnishings, home linen and made-ups. Each piece is unique: subtly interwoven in different combinations of soft silk & wild silk fibers that have been hand dyed with substances like eucalyptus



sustain nature's rich bio-diversity.

Nirman  
Fabrics by Sarah  
Fashion

from Guwahati, Assam, is led by Twarita Das and was represented at IHGF by Bapan Sarkar who strongly feels that youngsters are leaving the craft heritage and should be motivated back to their roots as this is like a treasury that can be tapped through proper structuring. They have been regulars at EPCH fairs since last four years and this time, were quite overwhelmed by the positive reception and greater coverage. **Handlooms are their forte with products like cushion covers and stoles.** They have also got selections in exquisite Muga and Eri silk. They export to US, France, Australia, Thailand, Sri Lanka as well as Malaysia.

"Assam is the only place where the world comes for silk," proclaims Puberun Sharma, with an air of local pride. Based in Nalbari, Assam, he deals in organically dyed, handspun Muga and Eri silk as well as cotton handloom stoles



and intends to include sarees in the immediate future. He has a retail store and also caters to buyers in Singapore,

New Zealand, Korea and USA. Having been in this profession since 8 years, Puberun appreciates overseas buyers who value organic and natural products. "Five to six years back, the market for Eri silk had diminished but now it sees a promising revival with changes in the traditional usage," he shares and adds about how shawls are modified into stoles to become user-friendly. As more colours are sought, natural dyes are mixed to attain new shades. He is concerned that as the products are handspun and artisan dependent, volumes are difficult to achieve in a limiting turnaround time. This at times, becomes the biggest hindrance in catering to seasonal international demands that also involve shipping time.

Haider Ali, from Sivasagar, Assam started working with



Muga and Eri silk in 2004, initially catering to boutiques in the local market and moving on to export markets like France, Germany and Russia. **His inspiration is his grandmother who used to work with banana fiber.** Though he deals in silk jackets, shawls, cushion covers, quilts and runners, his main focus is on silk stoles and

king size shawls that include use of natural dyes in the fiber stage and traditional hand spinning techniques thereafter. "Most find the products value for money and those who use it once come back for more", he quips and informs of Eri silk's therapeutic property of keeping throat infections at bay, if used as neck warmers.

A bedecked Puspi Brahma from Kokrajhar, Assam got along a range in **water hyacinth products like dining mats, ladies bags, yoga mats, baskets and storage boxes**

in her second time participation at IHGF. She was noticeably overwhelmed with the positive response and the grand platform EPCH provided through this theme participation. She aims for further exports of her finely crafted ethnic products and hopes to be part of the fair the next time too.



**Many cushions in handloom and silk stoles displayed alongside cotton kurtis** adorned the stall of Chanu Creations, Manipur, owned by Indira Chirom and represented by her associate. They offered an exotic display of handloom home textiles tailored for their established buyer base in several European countries. They have manufacturing units and dyeing units in Manipur and Delhi NCR, primarily employing women.



**Manipuri Longpi stone pottery specialist Mathew Sasa** has worked with buyers from Belgium and France. He lined up new products confirming to new trends and international market demands. The raw materials used are weathered rock and serpentine rock, crushed to a powder and mixed with



water in a ratio of 5:3 to form a clay-like consistency. The dull-brown mixture is kneaded the entire day and flattened on a wooden

board for the initial slab work. Uniquely, Longpi pots are not crafted on a potter's wheel. Every item is shaped by hand with the help of molds and tools.



Keisham Babita Devi from Manipur got along aqua weaves, i.e., **bags and baskets made of shitalpatti, water hyacinth and other natural fibers** drawn from the river side. Her stall sported a vibrant range in handloom bags with trims & tassels. This entrepreneur working with about 100 women artisans, exports to USA

and France. This was her first participation at the fair and she is happy at the learning & exposure.

**Bamboo and cane mats and decorative/utility boxes, emphatic idols of Hindu deities-lord Ganesha and Shiva - all carved in wood from**



bamboo roots, a 5 piece small storage box set and jewellery boxes as well as a foldable floor lamp formed the pride of place at Amit Debnath's stall. He works in combination with Gayama wood found in Tripura.

**Lots of bell metal products, traditional Assamese rice plates made of bell metal, Eri and Muga silk fabrics and saris** on display, mulberry and tussar silk fabrics as well as colorful stoles and traditional Assamese Mekhala chadors attracted attention to Anindita Kalita's stall in the NER pavilion.



Guided by her mother & mentor, she works with 4 to 5 artisans and monitors her production process passionately.



Ranjeeta Biswaal from Assam specializes in textiles mainly cushion covers, curtains and bed spreads. Highlights of her stall were interesting

**coasters and sets in wooden and wood glass combinations** in trays with flowers set on the wood and visible through the glass. She also offers a line in decorative wall paintings.



**Exquisite and very creative bamboo serveware** featured in this pavilion owing to a thoughtfully designed collection in plates, wine glasses, coffee mugs, cups, small canisters, bowls and casseroles by Mizoram based Laldenpuia. These casseroles have insulation to keep food warm. Hnam Chhantu Pawl is the brand name these serve wares go by though the logo proudly reads 'Mizoram'. The plates have a unique natural coiling pattern and lacquer adds the shine. This first time participant received many buyer enquiries.



Founded in 2010 in Barpeta, Assam, Tambul Plates Marketing Limited is more of a movement to bring completely chemical free biodegradable tableware to modern lifestyles, said their representative Arindam dasgupta. The spoons, plates, bowls and trays have simple & attractive designs, are hygienic and even liquid and heat proof. Made from the arecanut palm sheath fiber, these are are biodegradable,



disposable, **chemical free, sturdy and light, and even microwave safe.** The product is a great help to the rural workers and they wish to generate livelihood for over 50,000 rural youth through this.



Khanmi Chon from Manipur brought to this platform, **home utility products like laundry baskets, bins, boxes, etc. made of kauna or water reed.** The plant is cut only when it has reached

maturity. Once cut, the stems are dried and become soft and pithy and quite brittle. A bunch of cut stems of the appropriate length are then woven to shape up as mats and other products. In their attempt to bring the regional craft to the mainstream, Kauna Craft seeks to reach out to a global clientele. Apart from being eco-friendly, they are also washable but not very durable, she says. She has around 20 artisans working for her and exports to Germany and USA besides catering to the domestic market. She has already got orders for her bags.

Brothers, Bhabatosh and Ashutosh Mondol specializing in their **family tradition of making sitalpatti products** with a team of 20 artisans, shared about the innovations their elders have lent to this craft. Their father, a National Awardee has mentored them. At the fair, they displayed mats, tiffin bags, carry

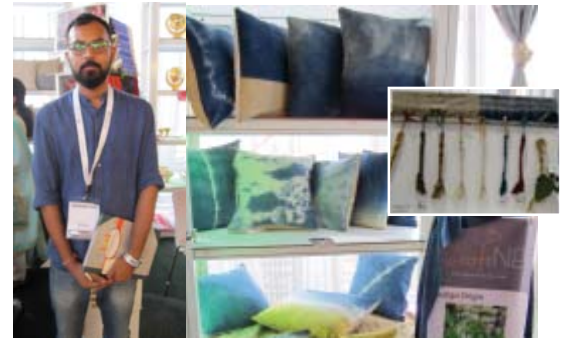


bags, ladies purses, jars, phone covers, ladies wallets, etc. Kanak Kanti Dhar from Tripura offered interesting bamboo based products like lamps, dolls, select furniture and table top products. **A plethora of natural fibers from the hills were at their glory** at the stall of Assam based Nature Trade, represented by Dipika, Pushpanjali Dutta, Jita



& Priyom Hazarika. Bags, runners, baskets, mats, purses, wallets, carry bags and much more offered a varied range. Among attractions were flower shaped runners made of jute, Eri and Muga silk artisanal apparel with bold digital prints, bags made of water hyacinth, cotton and corn fiber, tuned for their export markets in USA, South Africa and China as well as domestic market in India's metros.

With products strongly based on organic products, Craft NE from Naogam, Assam,



functioning under the support of Regional Design and Technical Development Centre of the Office of Development Commissioner (Handicrafts), Guwahati, was represented by Narendra Borah and his associate. **They are promoting indigo and brought along, 100% natural dyed fabrics sans any trace of chemicals.** Evidently, they want indigo to get its due as the home furnishings and made-ups in their stall were awash with this shade. "Our artisans are the designers and we are nothing without them," they say.

Among artisan welfare organizations, The North Eastern Handloom and Handicrafts Development Corporation, Assam, with a display of cane & bamboo furniture was represented by Mahendra Handique who shared that they work with over 1000 artisans and their products are exported to Singapore, Malaysia and Sri Lanka. Cane & Bamboo Technology Center, Assam was represented by Tamreigo. On display were cane & bamboo home decor and utility, artisans post-training have produced. There were many selections in cane & bamboo products from other participants too. ■

# Toast of the season Natural Fibers

An exclusive showcase of natural fibers featured among thematic presentations in the NER Theme Pavilion during IHGF Delhi Fair-Autumn 2016. It was a beautifully illustrated endeavor by leading Filipino lifestyle designer, PJ Aranador to familiarize the audience as well as compel many not only to pause and admire the beauty & versatility of nature's gifts and their fascinating cyclical attributes, but also explore possibilities of working with them. PJ's enriching experience in this field as well as association with crafts and crafts persons in the North East Region of India in course of his twelve years association with EPCH and the Indian handicrafts industry has been instrumental in drawing out a wholesome representation of Indian natural fibers to this showcase. Curated with aesthetics amidst home & lifestyle settings, this presentation includes natural fibers in varied manifestations. Among protagonists are home decoratives, fashion accessories, utility assortments and innovations inspired by wide-ranging attributes of sustainable and bio-degradable raw material drawn from nature.



Kauna Grass & Sitalpatti



Jute & Jute in combination with Linen



Eri & Muga  
Silk



Bamboo & Arecanut Palm



Natural fiber products have certain distinctive qualities: they share a common language of colour, texture and of belonging to the earth. The appearance, feel and texture of a bamboo basket is clearly different from that of a plastic bag. No two bamboo baskets are of the same colour while they could have the same form... just as a woven surface, like a reed mat, could have many shades of white or brown. ■