

Sourcing from Handloom Clusters of India

Virtual Panel Discussion on National Handloom Day



7th August 2020: On the occasion of the 6th National Handloom Day*, Export Promotion Council for Handicrafts (EPCH), in association with Buying Agents Association (BAA), organised a virtual panel discussion on "Sourcing from Handloom Clusters of India". The session was well attended by the Council's member exporters from different parts of the country along with Mr. Ravi K Passi, Chairman, EPCH; Mr. R K Malhotra, Vice Chairman, EPCH; Mr. R K Verma, Executive Director, EPCH; Members of Committee of Administration; and Mr. Rajesh Rawat, Joint Director, EPCH. As expert panelists, Ms. Mudita Mishra, ADC (Handicrafts); Mr. Santosh Kumar Singh ADC (Handlooms); Mr. T V Chandrasekaran, Chairman

(HEPC); Mr. Vishal Dhingra, Chairman, BAA; Ms. Anchal Kansal, General Secretary, BAA; and Mr. Sanjay Kumar, Executive Director, CEPC, shared their vast experience.

In his opening address, **Mr. Ravi K Passi, Chairman, EPCH**, stressed on the need to continue with the long and illustrative history, heritage and craftsmanship of handlooms and encourage youngsters to adopt the same, thus keeping alive, the heritage of producing the best of textile products from the country. And in order to do so, he added, "the use of handloom products should be promoted amongst our youth in a way that would appeal to them and as per their tastes & preferences. Online marketing

mediums can be used to reach out to them." Mr. Passi further said that we have with us policy makers and buying agents to educate on how to encourage sourcing from different clusters of the country and what the world wants, referring to the presence of panelists at the discussion.

Mr. Rakesh Kumar, Director General, EPCH, during his address, briefed the attendees about the wide variety of handlooms available in the country. "India has a rich heritage in handlooms and craft clusters across the country have been instrumental in continuing the traditional skills as well as exclusive cultures related to each individual craft form. EPCH has always promoted handcrafted handlooms through its fairs and activities," Mr. Kumar said. He also emphasised that member exporters need to adopt a business strategy for optimising all resources for future in this situation and hoped for more business opportunities for the handicrafts industry.

Ms. Anchal Kansal, General Secretary, BAA, made a presentation on handlooms and the handloom clusters in India, focusing on, why to source, how to source and where to source handlooms from the country. She highlighted how handloom is strategic push to Indian culture and heritage. From Pashmina work in Kashmir to Kanjivaram in South, Patola work done in west to Mizu-juan in east are the widespread of Handlooms in India. 4.3 million people are involved in production. Handloom being the second largest employment generation sector in India. On Why to source from India?, she explained about India's wealth of highly skilled artisans, artistic creativity, customisation in MOQ, varied raw material base, hub of sustainable fabrics, etc. She also highlighted the issues faced by the handloom sector like, high production costs, lack of modernisation, change in consumer

preferences, working capital issue, increased competition, lack of training, etc.

Ms. Mudita Mishra, Additional Development Commissioner (Handicrafts), Ministry of Textiles, Govt. of India and Managing Director, National Handloom Development Corporation Ltd. spoke about the intervention of technology in handlooms but despite all the innovations, it is important that the intrinsic nature of handlooms which is handmade in nature, is preserved at any cost. Further she also spoke about the role of National Handloom Development Corporation Limited in providing Raw Material to Handloom weavers and also setting up of Warehouses in each state along with depots allotted to the weavers. She added, "under the guidance of Honourable Minister of Textiles, major intervention done was proper supply of yarn to the weavers and artisans at their door step along with the subsidy in their bank accounts as Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT). Another intervention was the availability of warehousing capacities. We are also carrying forward the e-Dhaga app launched by the PM.

Mr. Sanjay Kumar, Executive Director, Carpet Export Promotion Council added about the export prospects of handloom durries and carpets and initiative taken by CEPC to promote the export of floor coverings in the international market. He also highlighted the key areas where the sector's issues need to be addressed like, reorganisation and development of organised carpet clusters; establishment of common facility centres; design centres to incentivise the R&D; development of artisans; brand promotion; and promotion of textiles tours.

Mr. Santosh Kumar Singh, Additional Development Commissioner (Handlooms), Ministry of Textiles, Govt. of India, specifically stressed on the need for intensive marketing,

*The National Handloom Day is celebrated to mark "Swadeshi Movement" launched in 1905. This day is observed annually to create awareness about the handloom industry amongst the public at large and its contribution to the socio-economic development. This sector depicts the nation's glorious cultural heritage and is also an important source of livelihood for people in the country. As over 70% of handloom weavers and allied workers are women, it acts as a key to women empowerment. The first National Handloom Day was inaugurated on 7th August 2015, by Hon'ble Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi at the Centenary Hall of Madras University in Chennai. Indian Handloom knowledge has expanded rapidly over the past several decades, but most of our interpretations are still under the influence of inherited mind set and indeed requires paradigm shift. Changes in human life - social, economic and or cultural initiated primarily because of technological innovations and changes in spatial and temporal dimensions, and in turn economic, social and cultural urges of a cognitive ecosystem challenges the technology for further progress. There is always some meaning behind normal human action and to understand rationale behind his/ her action one should understand the process of art and crafts cultural constructs through contextual archaeological evidence in time and space.

introduction of technology and scalability to push the promotion and propagation of handlooms in the country and in the overseas markets. He stressed on the need for training and educating the weavers to be ambitious and enterprising so as to set high benchmarks and thereby not limit themselves to just earning their livelihood but look beyond. He further mentioned of the new initiatives by the MOT that helps weavers get benefit like on boarding of the weavers on GeM portal. Mr. Singh also stressed on the need for integration of weavers into production sectors; development of design and marketing centres; and increasing visibility of the handloom sector.

Mr. T V Chandrasekaran, Chairman, Handloom Export Promotion Council (HEPC), during his address informed that the handloom sector has been badly hit by the pandemic but HEPC is handholding exporter members and in this direction and a virtual fair is being organised to provide them the marketing platform. He further added that they are encouraging their weavers to improve quantity with quality and trying to convert them into exporters. "For strategising handlooms into a niche market, interventions are required like, changing of mindset of weavers; urging them towards improved quality; avoiding products

that can be produced in powerloom; improving wages; providing skill training, etc.," Mr. Chandrasekran concluded.

Mr. Vishal Dhingra, Chairman, BAA, urged the young generation to focus on "Branding" while exporting. He said that with changing time every individual has to adapt according to time. Branding has been always lacking point against India. Weavers are unable to connect with the younger generation due to which India has failed in branding. He also quoted some big brands available India who use Indian resource in their favour. "So every opportunity should be captured with the the help of Government," he emphasised.

Mr. R K Verma, Executive Director, EPCH, informed that due to present pandemic situation, EPCH has explored the digital option of virtual platform and successfully organised three fairs on virtual platform, providing a great opportunity to member exporters as well as overseas buyers. He emphasised on the need of the hour to embrace technology. Mr. Verma also highlighted the services provided by the EPCH related to design protection. He explained about Design register, the service that EPCH provides to protect member exporters' innovations and new product lines from copying. ■