

# Picking up the Threads

## Revival Plan for Furnishings, Home Textiles & Floor Coverings

Link to recording: <https://www.facebook.com/pg/epchindia/posts/>

**13th May 2020:** Moderated by **Mr. Rajesh Rawat, Joint Director, EPCH**, this was attended by over 500 member exporters from PAN India basis including Mr. Ravi K Passi, Chairman, EPCH; Mr. R K Malhotra, Vice Chairman, EPCH; Mr. Rakesh Kumar, Director General, EPCH; and Mr. R K Verma, Executive Director, EPCH.

**Ms. Christine Rai, Indian Inc., New Delhi and Chairperson, BAA** said that this is a time for the new normal, trading online, virtual shows & conferences, no travelling to cities across the globe with suitcases full of samples to meet buyers/

business partners, etc. She urged the exporters community to "not to get psyched but accept and embrace this situation; look beyond at what we can do; what we need to do to protect our businesses and to keep them going; think out of the box at how to approach business with a new outlook; and essentially adapt to new technology fast. Pointing at India's USP of being "hugely creative", she said, "we may have to shrink our businesses to grow them back again but let's not be afraid. Instead, figure out how we can emerge victorious by harnessing creativity, learning

new skills, transitioning to the new normal and accepting that we are not going to go back to old way of living and doing things." She appreciated EPCH's initiative of holding virtual shows and said she looked forward to be a part of it.

**Mr. K N Prabhu, Paradigm International, Karur and immediate past Chairman, HEPC**

was of the opinion that handloom exporters at present are at crossroads as to how to improve their business. The main challenge is cancellation of orders and scarcity of workforce. He said, "globally marketing activity is near standstill. The handloom sector is affected as badly as any other, and needs financial support. Widespread order cancellations has put businesses in jeopardy and govt. relief package will be of immense help." On effect and importance of SOPs post COVID, he said that only the workforce reduction may hamper production activities not the other clauses like social distancing, sanitation measures, etc.

**Mr. Sunit K Jain, Ratan Textiles Pvt. Ltd., Jaipur** said, "Life essentially has changed in terms of everything and the way we do business. Lot of my old associates may not be in business by the times things totally normalise. The biggest opportunity I see is that we are in a rock bottom position with nothing more to lose. So the fear is no longer there. From here things will only go up.

**Picking Up  
The Threads**

**resume • remodel • restore**

**REVIVAL PLAN FOR FURNISHINGS,  
HOME TEXTILES & FLOOR COVERINGS**

**3.00 pm - 13<sup>th</sup> May 2020 (Wednesday)**

**Presentation on  
Virtual Trade Fair  
for the products segment**

So, building on that optimism."

Before COVID-19 Mr. Jain's company was supplying OEM goods to labels, brands, stores, etc. He said, "as things open up I am learning that many of my buyers have either shrunk their businesses or are not in a position to buy new stuff at this point in time or are no longer in business." So the challenge is how to leverage on this, he said and added, "the online and digital route is the only way now to reach out to customers. Their facilitation centres could be used, we can create our own brands and introduce product lines that we could not venture into while bringing out customised

products for my buyers. So, the choice of putting my products online will give me the liberty to offer my creativity and my price points." Mr. Jain added of the risk factor that earlier there was surety of all goods getting sold as they were as per buyers' requisitions but now its otherwise, so caution has to applied in investing in the right amount of inventory to make sure there are less leftovers. "Profits can soar up if I play cautiously," he concluded.

**Mr. Vinay Kanodia, Kanodia Global Pvt. Ltd.** shared his thoughts from his 30 years of experience. On the present situation he said, business was good with orders and enquiries at the beginning of the season. Under normal circumstances, big orders would be shipped in July, August and September, based on the orders received during the first quarter of the year. Then came this pandemic and disrupted everything. While their small buyers are taking the goods, the big buyers are "playing games with our exporters. They are buying from already reached shipments there on discounts and not taking our goods that they had ordered. So, everyone in the handlooms/textiles sector is facing a big problem, especially in the 3 months of April-July. This will averagely bring an annual export turnover loss of 25%." He added about the shortage of workers contributing to the predicament alongside

**PANELISTS**

			
<b>Ms. Christine Rai</b> Indian Inc., New Delhi and Chairperson, BAA	<b>Dr. K. N. Prabhu</b> Paradigm International, Karur and Immediate past Chairman, HEPC	<b>Mr. Vinay Kanodia</b> Kanodia Global Pvt. Ltd. New Delhi	<b>Mr. Sunit K. Jain</b> Ratan Textiles Pvt. Ltd. Jaipur
			
<b>Mr. Ahmed Sundarani</b> Shahenaz Exports Mumbai	<b>Mr. Naveen Surana</b> Navkar Home Bikaner	<b>Mr. Vivek Venugopal</b> William Goodacre & Sons India Pvt. Ltd., Alleppey	<b>Ms. Manidipa Guha</b> Diversified Products Division, Gloster Ltd., Kolkata

buyers changing their product line or cancelling orders and not bothering of long term relations. In the situation in case of no payment, banks may charge higher penalty. So, the Govt. should address the issue on priority and give relief. There could be subsidised rate of interest from the banks.

**Mr. Ahmed Sundarani, Shahenaz Exports, Mumbai,** shared about his brand presence in the Indian retail market, stores at The Oberoi and the Mumbai International airport as well as their export presence in over 30 countries. He said, "today there are only a handful of brands that are catering to the Indian customers, so there is a great scope for Indian exporters to look at the domestic market," and added that IHGF Delhi Fair's opening up to big domestic buyers has made the entire domestic market open up to exporters. The gap has become smaller. Exporters have started to look at their home market. Those who haven't can take their "baby steps" and start with selling online, then after testing how the products move on such sites, open small stores in malls, shopping arcades, high streets, move to e-Commerce, etc. In conclusion, Mr. Sundarani urged the exporting community to be forthcoming towards EPCH's newly conceptualised virtual fairs in this given scenario as it will take a while before physical fairs resume.

**Mr. Naveen Surana, Navkar Home, Bikaner** said that the supply chain has been affected with issues in logistics with this pandemic. This can be managed with a better inventory management and consolidating things. "Earlier we used to send couriers to our buyers twice a week but now it will be once a fortnight," he said and added that instead of the Mumbai Port he has started diverting his shipments to the Mundra Port which is not that busy. He suggested that in future too shipments could be diverted so that the load is not on a single port. The next issue is lack of adequate workforce as many of them have gone back to their native places now. He was of the view that the ones that are there should be kept happy and motivated. He also touched upon how the pandemic has hampered business development activities like travelling to overseas exhibitions or inviting buyers to shows in India. Appreciating conceptualisation of EPCH's virtual shows as a good opportunity in the present 'work from home' situation, Mr. Surana said that while the physical shows and the personal interactions will be missed, this will help exporters stay afloat while waiting for better times.

**Ms. Manidipa Guha, Diversified Products Division, Gloster Ltd., Kolkata** emphasised on normal pace of production in this highly labour intensive industry being hindered due to the lockdown and shortage of labour as workers are hesitant to come to work. She also pointed out on postponement of existing orders due to the effects of the pandemic in markets across the globe and when normalcy is restored post COVID-19, buyers' product requirements and attitudes will go through a paradigm shift. "Infrastructure wise, we are still behind China but can work on it," she said and added, "the whole world is still looking towards India to fulfill its orders. Post this pandemic there could be big order shifts to India as many countries like USA and Germany are

already looking at us." Ms. Guha also foresees a strong inclination towards sustainable products (her product line).

**Mr. Ravi K Passi, Chairman, EPCH** referred to disasters of the past like the world wars and their effects that lasted for a long time, yet the world dealt with them and came out. "This pandemic too has affected the world in a similar way but it's important to hold on to positivity, prepare for post COVID-19, strategise new ways of doing business and look for alternatives as well," he advised.

**Mr. Raj K Malhotra, Vice Chairman, EPCH** said, "there is no doubt that we have to start everything in a different way now as life has gone through a complete change. The business scenario has changed and caution will have to apply to all stages of pre-production, production and post-production." He called the EPCH virtual shows "the need of the hour".

**Mr. Rakesh Kumar, Director General, EPCH** mentioned about recent announcements of the Hon'ble PM for the sector.. He also shared about EPCH's virtual shows and how prospective exhibitors are preparing for them. Saying that its time to redefine sourcing, he shared his optimism at the results of the virtual shows as they would bring about lot of noticeability to the Indian handicrafts fraternity.

**Mr. R K Verma, Executive Director, EPCH** was of the opinion that everything has to start in different way to cope up with the present COVID-19 environment as well as in the export business. Following the panel discussion was a detailed presentation of the IHGF Textiles Virtual Fair and its various engaging & interactive features, complete with exhibitor stalls, webinars, craft demonstrations, display awards, ramp presentations as well as inauguration and closing ceremonies. ■