

EPCH Webinars keep handicrafts fraternity connected amidst lockdown

Initiative hailed by member exporters, online interactive platform brings several concerns on board for discussion, guidance and remedial measures



As part of its commitment to provide uninterrupted services to its member-exporters via online mediums and boost their morale of the member-exporters, EPCH has been organising webinars on various topics and issues of concern to the handicrafts fraternity. Each webinar is intended to be an opportunity to make use of the present situation to brush up skills and find new ways of doing things, so that when businesses revive the handicrafts fraternity is well equipped to handle the latest/new demands and requirements. For a thorough understanding and a broader view of the topics, each webinar features an eminent expert faculty/guest speaker as the technical expert and practical experts - member exporters who present their views from experience in the particular segment/issue of concern. 10 webinars were organised during the month of April and were also graced by Chairman, EPCH - Mr. Ravi K Passi; Director General, EPCH - Mr. Rakesh Kumar; and Executive Director, EPCH - Mr. R K Verma. They presented their points of view and guided the member exporters on the given topics of discussion. Many of these webinars were for pan-India and saw over 500 attendees each on an average. Most saw registrations exceeding 1000.

GST Practical Implications & Current Scenario

Link to recording: <https://youtu.be/jq2vidv3TSE>

9th April 2020: This webinar was organised for EPCH member exporters in the Uttar Pradesh. With Mr. Shobhit Sinha, Deputy Commissioner IGST, Moradabad and CA Abhinav Agarwal from Moradabad as the main speakers, this saw the presence of Mr. Naved-Ur-Rehman, Vice Chairman-EPCH; and COA members, EPCH - Mr. Sharad Bansal and Mr. Nabeel Ahmed; and Mr. R K Verma, Executive Director, EPCH. Besides over 70 member exporters, this webinar was attended by representatives from 4 handicraft associations of Moradabad - Moradabad Handicrafts Exporters Association (MHEA); Young Entrepreneur Society (YES); LUB and IIA, who were present to raise issues faced by the handicrafts industry of Moradabad. They raised various points which were discussed at length.

Mr. R K Verma, Executive Director, EPCH, welcomed the member participants and informed that the Council in consultation with various handicrafts associations is continuously discussing with various ministries to help the industry at this crucial time. The Government in response of the Council's representations took steps to support the industry in the form of various changes on GST portal as to help exporters sail through these difficult times.

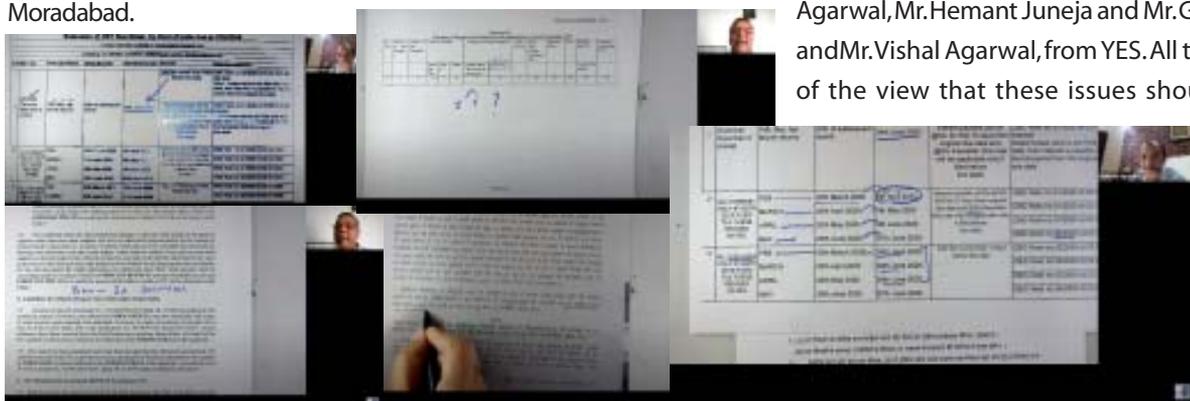
Mr. Abhinav Agarwal, Chartered Accountant, briefed the audience about the various notifications issued by the Govt. of India related to GST to help member exporters. He also mentioned of areas where exporters suffered due to non clarity in the notifications and offered detailed explanations on them. Mr. Agarwal pointed out the issues related to Govt. Orders that have been issued by the GST Department in the recent past. There were practical issues due to these orders and the same were conveyed to Mr. Shobhit Sinha, Deputy Commissioner IGST, Moradabad.



The association representatives conveyed Moradabad industry's concerns and raised some specific issues:

- ♦ Immediate release of refunds to improve the liquidity of exporters so that they can utilise these funds to support their staff, workers and entire supply chain and mitigate the bigger issue of labour disruption and unemployment.
- ♦ Immediate relief to Exporters on the Red Alert list.
- ♦ Unblocking of IEC across various ports due to minimal short payments, which have resulted in non refund of IGST and DBK as well.
- ♦ Lastly, a Joint Effort by all organisations to prepare a technically correct and appropriate representation to the concerned Ministry which has been well appreciated by all.

Mr. R K Verma, Executive Director, EPCH, concluded the webinar with the suggestion and directive to prepare a comprehensive representation under guidance and support of CA Abhinav Agarwal. Many industry issues were raised by Mr. Avdesh Agarwal and Mr. Najmul Islam from MHEA; Mr. Anshul Agarwal, Mr. Hemant Juneja and Mr. Gaurav Ohri from LUB; and Mr. Vishal Agarwal, from YES. All the associations were of the view that these issues should be immediately



forwarded to the concerned departments of the Govt. of India so that some relief is granted on the industry. ■

Thinking Tommorrow: Trends & Forecast-SS 2021 and Colour Palette-AW 2021/22

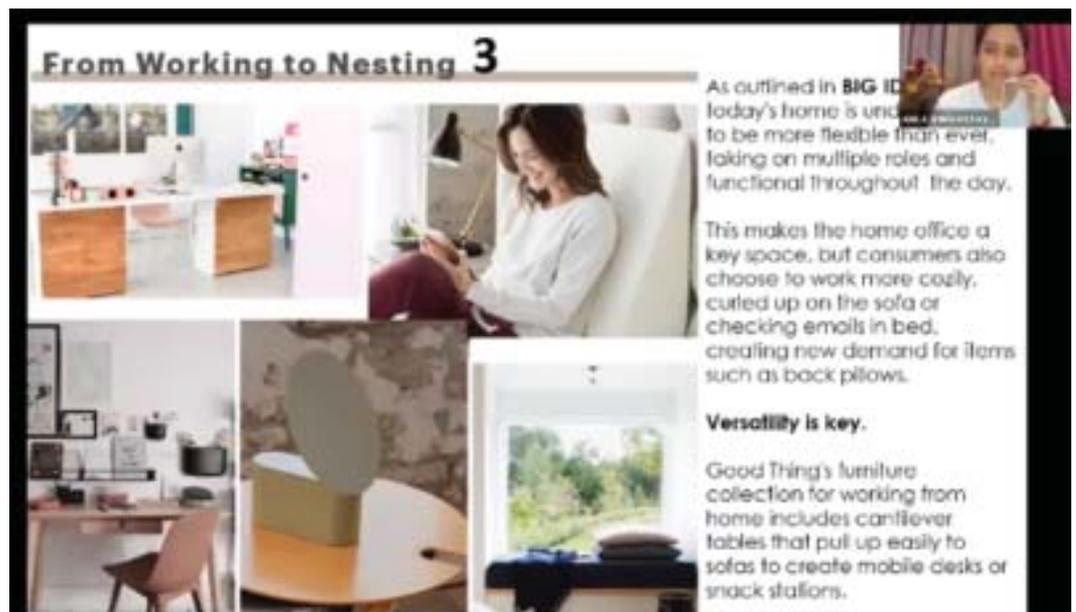
Link to recording: <https://youtu.be/jifJQo-15bo>

11th April 2020: Well attended by 244 member exporters from different parts of the country, this webinar had among expert panelists, eminent exporters representing Jaipur, Jodhpur, Moradabad and North East Region like Ms. Jesmina Zeliang, COA Member and Region Convenor-NER, EPCH; Mr. Gaurav Jain from Jodhpur; Mr. Naved-ur-Rehman, Vice Chairman, EPCH; Mr. Suneet Jain from Jodhpur; and Mr. Sanjeev Kahali an eminent designer & exporter from Jodhpur; as well as Mr. Rakesh Kumar, Director General, EPCH; Mr. R K Verma, Executive Director, EPCH; Mr. Rajesh Rawat, Joint Director, EPCH; and Ms. Amla Srivastava, Head Designer, EPCH.



Mr. Rakesh Kumar, Director General, EPCH; Ms. Jesmina Zeliang, COA Member and Region Convenor-NER, EPCH; Mr. Gaurav Jain, eminent exporter from Jodhpur; Mr. Naved-ur-Rehman, Vice Chairman, EPCH; Mr. Suneet Jain, eminent exporter from Jodhpur; Mr. Sanjeev Kahali an eminent designer & exporter from Jodhpur; and Mr. R K Verma, Executive Director, EPCH

Mr. Rakesh Kumar, Director General, EPCH, in his opening remarks informed that the present situation will not last forever and most of the overseas companies in their own countries are getting ready to start business waiting for the situation to normalise. Later in the webinar, he announced of EPCH's plans to shortly launch a virtual fair to offer a business and match making platform for its member exporters/ exhibitors, overseas buyers,



domestic volume buyers and buying agents. A design register to safeguard the interest of members' product designs is also being launched, he said. The webinar constituted of a comprehensive design presentation by **Ms. Amla Shrivastava, Head Designer, EPCH**. She inspired the participants to consider the new scenario of doing business where customers will be adapting to a new lifestyle, thereby creating a demand for functional, utilitarian, sustainable, reusable and multi-functional products fitting to their transformed way of living and consuming products & services. **Ms. Jesmina Zeliang, COA Member and Region Convener, EPCH** shared her views that the world will reconnect with nature once again as people will look for natural products. **Mr. Sunit Jain, eminent exporter from Jaipur** said, "we should not keep all our eggs in one basket, we need to find new channels for exports and also our presentation of products has to go through a change and needs be very good."

Another eminent exporter from Jodhpur, Mr. Gaurav Jain stressed on the need to encourage 'Make in India' to lessen our dependency on imports of houseware, gifts, etc. and start producing such items for this huge market that is yet to be tapped completely. **Mr. Sanjeev Kahali, eminent designer & exporter**



Ms. Amla Shrivastava, Head Designer, EPCH, seen making the presentation

from Jodhpur appreciated EPCH's efforts for providing such insightful presentations that would help exporters to be informed and updated as buying pattern will change in post COVID-19 time. **Mr. Naved-ur-Rehman, Vice Chairman, EPCH**, said that exporters should be prepared to accept new ways of doing business and focus on "strengths to adapt as per buyer expectations".

Mr. R K Verma, Executive Director, EPCH requested members to stay connected and avail full benefit of such EPCH knowledge sessions to prepare in these times for the upcoming changed market competitions. All the panelists were optimistic and confident that better planning and preparedness, adoption of technology, usage of online marketing tools, digital marketing, diversification in terms of product/markets/countries/customers, photography of articles for sharing with customers, adopting COVID safety standards for products and work places for increased acceptability, will surely help. The speakers shared their knowledge on what customers will look for, what can and should be created or developed; how product development will evolve to suite lifestyle Post COVID-19. They also discussed the need to focus on the changing aspirations and evolving needs of buyers. ■

Leadership and Strategy in “VUCA” World

13th April 2020: VUCA is an acronym that stands for a combination of qualities (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, Ambiguous) that, when taken together, characterise the nature of some difficult conditions and situations like COVID-19. The term is also sometimes to cope-up with the present business scenario. EPCH organised a webinar on this topic with guest faculty, Prof. (Dr.) S P Chauhan and Prof. (Dr.) Surabhi Goyal of (Institute) Faculty of Corporate Training and Development (FCTD); and Mr. Sanjay Nagi, Managing Director, Tomorrow's Market Innovators Pvt. Ltd., Moderated by Mr. Rajesh Rawat, Joint Director, EPCH, this

was attended by over 190 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.

Dr. Surabhi Goyal from FCTD explained the VUCA terminology breaking it down to 'V' for speed of change in

technology, price, etc.; 'U' for uncertainty and unpredictability; 'C' for complexity that come in the form of various problems and big network of issues that will effect trade; 'A' for a state of ambiguity or uncertainty that leads to confusion, state of chaos and lack of clarity. Calling VUCA a missile, Dr. Goyal suggested that methods to 'counterattack' this missile need to be devised with strategies:

- For the Volatile, devise goals, activities and timelines, not just for oneself but for the entire office.
- To combat the Uncertain, work on new skills & innovative design, involve workers with rewards & encouragement.
- Complex can be challenged with clarity by deciding on priorities, taking up one problem at a time, deal with each segment, one at a time.
- Ambiguity can be hurdled by communicating to bring back the lost energy and this is not possible without unique leadership traits that can use this time as an opportunity.

Dr. S P Chauhan from FCTD elaborated on the topic and informed of some psychological measures to combat the present situation. Use the word, 'problems' less and 'issues', or 'challenges' more, he emphasised. "Capabilities and competencies of leaders will help a team sail through these times," he said and added that it is crucial to stay positive and focus on the two 'R's-relationships that need to be prioritised and being result oriented is the order of the day. Dr. Chauhan thereafter explained about responsibility, roles and resources. Ability without responsibility becomes liability, he said and added that leaders should be like parents and think that way. Finally, he underlined the importance of staying calm.

PANELISTS

 <p>Mr. Ravi K. Passi Chairman, Export Promotion Council for Handicrafts (EPCH)</p>	 <p>Mr. Rakesh Kumar Director General, Export Promotion Council for Handicrafts (EPCH)</p>
 <p>Mr. R.K. Malhotra Vice Chairman, Export Promotion Council for Handicrafts (EPCH)</p>	 <p>Prof. (Dr.) S.P. Chauhan Faculty of Corporate Training and Development (FCTD)</p>
 <p>Mr. Sanjay Nagi Managing Director, Tomorrow's Market Innovators Pvt. Ltd.</p>	 <p>Prof. (Dr.) Surabhi Goyal Faculty of Corporate Training and Development (FCTD)</p>



Market insight consultant, Mr. Sanjay Nagi offered a 6 points strategy to tide through this situation:

- Risk assessment should be done at a individual level as “one size fits all’ strategy won’t work anymore. The three types of risks are strategic(in context of market & customer); tactical(labour availability with many gone back to villages); and operational (managing current liquidity intelligently).
- Taking a 2 team approach and assign them for fire-fighting and preparing for recovery separately.
- Cost management and innovation management can happen parallely. This will include product design & innovation; process innovation; raw material innovation that is very relevant for this sector; and business model innovation. Add to this the tool of ‘Idea Factory’ that allows flow of thoughts and anybody can come up with an idea.
- Use of networking ability and infrastructure like CFCs for capacity enhancement. Competitors can become collaborators-idle capacities of one can be used by another and vice versa.
- Take data based decisions. Follow your head, not heart as errors cannot be absorbed in this scenario. Mistakes will be costly.
- Focus on core activity, not much on diversification by getting influenced seeing short term market demands. However, this can be individualistic and may work for some.

“Change is imminent,” said **Mr. Ravi K Passi, Chairman, EPCH** and advised the sector to use this time to create a momentum of ‘Make in India,’ ‘Buy in India,’ and ‘Sell in India.’

Mr. Raj K Malhotra, Vice Chairman, EPCH, said, “we must look at ourselves and feel grateful for being in a better position than so many others,” and added that buyers have indicated of stability in times to come. They have assured that they will buy from India and will take pride in displaying goods ‘Made in India.’ It is a morale booster. For the way ahead, Mr. Malhotra said, EPCH is working with the concerned Govt. departments for relief and recovery for the sector. On our part, we need to spruce up our paper work and compliances against COVID-19, so as to show how our workers enter our premises, how our products will be made and how he said and how will they be packed-buyers will want to know everything.

Mr. Rakesh Kumar, Director General, EPCH, said that this is a trying time and Indian businesses will come out stronger. He also said that this is the best time for member exporters to re-plan their team for short and long term business strategies. He

emphasised on the adoption of a way for optimising all resources for the new future. “Desperate times bring out desperate measures,” he quipped and added, “these times are a true test of how well you function during crisis. So, set a role model. Use the time for self-introspection. Make realistic plans. Coordinate and interact with entire team, even lower staff. Encourage new ideas & output” Mr. Kumar also stressed on budgeting and adopting a lean manufacturing process and optimum utilisation of resources - including people. In conclusion, he informed of ‘COVID-19 Protected’ standards being developed by EPCH for the time when factories reopen and shipment is ready to set sail. **Mr. R K Verma, Executive Director, EPCH**, said that while this time is a challenge, it is a space to restructure resources, replan and restart. True leaders will lead their team in the right direction. “As the world shifts its gaze from China, India will benefit from business and collaborations, so let us be ready,” he concluded. ■

To build agility engage your organisation one team at a time

In the context of the novel coronavirus and its economic, social, personal, and political reverberations, how do leaders lead well amid such turbulence. Thankfully, leaders increasingly prioritise people. They recognise the need to communicate proactively and to support employees, customers, suppliers, and other stakeholders in staying healthy, productive, and engaged as the world around them changes. At this point, it all integrates the message with **people, their goals, and their work. By definition, a team represents a combination of these three elements.** Now, as the coronavirus global health emergency continues to unfold, leaders are likely managing multiple changes in parallel: training employees to work remotely, adopting new safety and social distancing measures, installing new equipment and software, revising budgets and forecasts, and figuring out how to keep customers or spin up new products and services. Although it is important to communicate openly with all employees, the place where changes come together is in the intact work team. Today, and the next time your business is facing VUCA, don't let these teams become an afterthought. Here are **five strategies** that will help intact work teams evolve and adjust in a coherent, integrated way : **Support** one another as people; **Agree** on guiding principles and new ways of working; **Revisit** shared purpose; **Realign** priorities. ■ *Source : Excerpts from an article at <https://www.strategy-business.com/blog>*

Risk Management with respect to Foreign Exchange & Banking Solutions

Link to recording: <https://youtu.be/iOrhubwf86U>

16th April 2020: EPCH conducted this webinar with an objective to address concerns of the trade in the current market conditions caused by the pandemic as well as unrest arising out of foreign exchange transactions and the need to hedge losses resulting from cancelled/postponed orders. Well attended by over 220 member exporters from PAN India basis, this was conducted by expert faculty, Mr. Nikhil Mehta of SMC Global Securities Ltd. and moderated by Mr. Rajesh Rawat, Joint Director, EPCH. The panelists were, Mr. O P Prahladka, Regional Convenor (East), EPCH; and Mr. D Kumar, Mr. Sharad Bansal, Mr. Vinod Singh Purohit and Mr. Vivek Vikas - eminent member exporters from

New Delhi, Moradabad, Greater Noida and Jodhpur, respectively. Also present to offer guidance and their views on the topic, Chairman, EPCH, Mr. Ravi K Passi; Director General, Mr. Rakesh Kumar; and Executive Director, Mr. R K Verma, graced the session.

Mr. Nikhil Mehta of SMC Global Securities Ltd. spoke about his firm's live FX Software, a live platform providing accurate real time foreign exchange conversion rates; dedicated relationship managers; availability of performance analysis report depicting addition post SMC or any other company alliance; etc. SMC is a diversified financial services company in India offering brokerage services across the asset classes of equities (cash and derivatives), commodities and currency, investment banking, wealth management, distribution of third party financial products, research, financing, depository services, insurance broking (life & non-life), clearing services, mortgage advisory and real estate advisory services.

The panelists shared their views on how forward booking of contracts is done by them and how it is useful/challenging in these times with specific focus on 'roll-over' policies of various banks. This technical session brought forth the following topics for a detailed presentation by the guest faculty and a brainstorming discussion, followed by clarifications on several aspects of this topic :

- Strategic Foreign currency Hedging Policy; Time Limit
- Forward contract in Forex with bankers and bulk order cancelling by buyers/no payment from buyers and solution for the same; cash flow crisis in exporters' community
- Packing credit loss suffering by handicraft exporters during COVID-19; Post COVID-19 challenges by exporters
- Basis to know current Forex rates in present situation; Authentic software for Forex
- Cautious about cancellation rate; how to cover loss in Forex through hedging in present situation
- Infrastructural gains to banker due to less Forex knowledge to SMEs
- Benefits of parallel USD account . ■

PANELISTS



 <p>Mr. Nikhil Mehta Business Head, Treasury & Debt Solution, SMC Global Securities Limited</p>	 <p>Mr. O.P. Prahladka Hitachi IOK-Manufacturing Company Pvt. Ltd., Kolkata</p>
 <p>Mr. D. Kumar Orient Art & Crafts New Delhi</p>	 <p>Mr. Sharad Bansal Bansal Impex Moradabad</p>
 <p>Mr. Vivek Vikas Vijay Design Inspiration Pvt. Ltd. Greater Noida</p>	 <p>Mr. Vinod Singh Rajpurohit Art & Crafts Inc. Jodhpur</p>

Picture Perfect Packaging Techniques & Ideas

Link to recording: <https://youtu.be/nqQCPVcbx70>

21st April 2020: With expert faculty, Mr. Lalit Mohan Gupta from Package Design Research & Test Lab., Moradabad; and Mr. Madhab Chakravorty from Indian Institute of Packaging, New Delhi, this webinar had Mr. Ravi K Passi, Chairman, EPCH; Mr. Raj K Malhotra, Vice President, EPCH; Mr. Rakesh Kumar, Director General, EPCH; and Mr. R K Verma, Executive Director, EPCH, among panelists and Mr. Gautam Nathani from Seet Kamal International, Jaipur; Mr. Neeraj Khanna from Nodi Exports, Moradabad; Mr. R B Lahoti from Richie Bags & Fashions Pvt. Ltd., Kolkata; and Mr. Arshad Mir from Mir Handicrafts, New Delhi, among practical experts. This was moderated by Mr. Rajesh Rawat, Joint Director, EPCH and was attended by over 750 member exporters (over 920 registered).

Through this webinar, attendees learnt about quality and cost reduction concepts in packaging in view of present times with reference to quality, presentation and competitive costs; eco-friendly packaging & labeling as per pre-requisites of buyers; influence of recent research on moisture absorption paper in high humidity conditions; cost effective yet appealing eco-friendly cushioning; Edge Crush Test (ECT) that denotes load bearing capacity of a packaging as just bursting strength is not enough now; branding in packaging, labeling, etc.; and classification of handicraft products for moisture protection.



PANELISTS



Mr. L N Gupta
Package Design Research
& Test Lab, Moradabad



Mr. Madhab Chakravorty
Indian Institute of Packaging
New Delhi



Mr. Gautam Nathani
Seet Kamal International
Jaipur



Mr. Neeraj Khanna
Nodi Exports
Moradabad



Mr. R B Lahoti
Richie Bags & Fashions
Pvt. Ltd., Kolkata



Mr. Arshad Mir
Mir Handicrafts
New Delhi

The expert faculty - **Mr. Lalit Mohan Gupta** from **Package Design Research & Test Lab., Moradabad**; **Mr. Madhab Chakravorty** from **Indian Institute of Packaging, New Delhi**, emphasised on the importance of eco-friendly packaging that has become a "hot requirement now" and advised exporters to steer away from thermocol, bubble sheets and wooden crating but instead, choose recent developments like honey comb packaging. "It may seem a bit expensive but actually makes up for the combined cost of thermocol & boxes," they said. They also stressed on individualised appealing packaging for handicraft products in a way that they are not only sturdy enough to withstand the various transfer routes to the buyer's warehouse but also become part of the product appeal on store shelves.

Mr. Rakesh Kumar, Director General, EPCH, gave a very interesting example of the human body and how each organ, depending on its vulnerability is protected and packaged. He also touched upon the simple paper packaging of light bulbs that are done with just a basic logic of keeping the content safe, and shared his views on how Swedish brand IKEA keeps its products on store shelves-ready to be picked, conveniently transferred to the shopper's destination and inclusive of all description and instructions within the packaging itself. "Easy to transport, assemble and disassembled," he said. He was of the view that packaging should be taken as a "beautifying product/value addition" and not just a outer covering material as innovative packaging can not only add to the appeal but also enhances the product quality and flexibility in shipments., while determining the credibility of the exporter and the nation. He also informed about the Common Facility Centre, Jaipur, offering testing facilities for the wooden handicrafts segment like drop test, pressure test, etc.

Mr. Rajesh Rawat, Joint Director, EPCH, added that a similar set of facilities is about to be set up and running at Saharanpur. To this some panelists urged for a CFC in Moradabad soon.

Mr. R K Malhotra, Vice Chairman, EPCH, stressed on the new requirement of buyers that strongly indicated use of recyclable and easy to dispose material. **Mr. Ravi K Passi, Chairman, EPCH**, echoed this sentiment and urged for time & effort investment towards innovative packaging to make products stand out among those of competitors. **Mr. R K Verma, Executive Director, EPCH**, emphasised on 'convenience to customers' and that packaging should be given equal parity as the product within, keeping in mind, safety and the total cost effectiveness.

Views presented by the practical experts brought in several ideas, making the participants give serious thought to this 'valuable segment' of a product presentation because that is

what catches the initial attention and leads to an opinion on the product, its quality & appeal, the manufacturer, his attitude and his attention to detail. Some of the extracts follow:

Mr. Neeraj Khanna : "Post COVID-19 we should use packaging as multi-functional. Buyers are asking for sustainable/recyclable material at low cost. We can innovate options taking cue from examples like a biodegradable polybag that can be dipped in water to dissolve it."

Mr. Arshad Mir : "We still follow 30 year old practices. This is an aspect where many competitors edge over us. Packaging can be attractive. We need to change the culture of packaging handling. Standards need to be adhered to and attention should be given to tags, labeling and even the thread that holds the tag. Manufacturers need to get involved in this department of their business just like they do in design and production. When a consignment leaves our premises it should look like a decked up bride and should be sturdy enough to survive the transits. In fact, when a buyer sees the shipment he should be thrilled to welcome it, not make a face by seeing its condition and wondering how the contents would be. Even in the warehouse, the products must look welcoming. High time we focused on this aspect and sensitised our packaging department."

Mr. Gautam Nathani : We in India use a lot of cling film and plastic in packaging. This can be done away with. We need to undo obsolete methods and move towards innovations. Since we do paper products and gift packaging, we offer good boxers with COB value. We see to it that our product has a character. Even our tapes are of paper. As an alternative to plastic, we have come up with a 'zero plastic' 100% eco-friendly packaging."

Mr. R B Lahoti : "Customers are asking for sustainable packaging with moisture protection. In fact they desire that they open the box and the product is ready to be put on the store shelf. Being an exporter of jute bags, I have come up with a packaging that exactly serves this purpose. "We need to be attentive to different requirements of retailers and souvenir shops." ■

The Neo Normal

A post-pandemic forecast of handicraft and lifestyle products for 2021

23rd April 2020: Loaded with design perspectives and practical directions for product making by the expert faculty, Dr. Kaustav SenGupta, Futurist & Academician; and industry panelists, this webinar was an engaging insight into a new approach to product innovation and presentation.

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. Raj K Malhotra, Vice President, EPCH; Mr. Rakesh Kumar, Director General, EPCH; and Mr. R K Verma, Executive Director, EPCH. The industry panelists

included, COA Member, Mr. Prince Malik from Osyrus Overseas; Mr. Rukshad Bhagwagar from Forms, Nagpur; COA Member, Mr. Simrandeep Singh Kohli from Sehaj Impex, New Delhi; and Mr. Puneet Ahuja from Ahujasons, New Delhi.

Dr. Kaustav SenGupta, Futurist & Academician, in his presentation of 2021 trends, spoke of life changing philosophies that this pandemic has brought upon. With change in social norms and habits, need for space within spaces, virtual becoming more real, etc. people will incline towards things that will take time to create like handmade, hand painted, handcrafted, etc. as well as products that remind them of home, comfort, assurance and spending quality time with near & dear ones. He indicated 6 themes that will be of significance in 2021: Enabler, Rejuvenism, Empath, The New Sanctuary, Candy Saga and Hyperlocal.

In the Q&A, Dr. SenGupta indicated of a consumer segment that will be about 'conspicuous existence', i.e. a group of individuals who will be prominent in the luxury domain. So, some amount of luxury items in clothing, make-up and jewellery will sell. He went on with an advice for deep-dive research on local craft recipes, use them and tell stories about them. Stories about our years old heritage define our strength. The expert faculty also urged

The Neo-normal
A post-pandemic forecast of handicraft and lifestyle products for 2021

As the minuscule virus takes over our consciousness and creates havoc, the impact will be visible in all domains of human-need, including handicrafts and lifestyle products. The fear, the uncertainty would impact the consumer mindsets globally. Yet positivity will bloom over recession and slowdown, as "hope" will take over 'fear' and the world will find the 'neo-normal'.

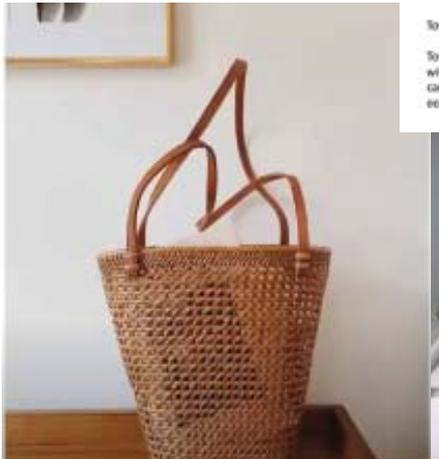
Dr. Kaustav SenGupta
Futurist & Academician
He would deep dive to help us understand the impacts in future directions through this webinar.

TRADE PANEL

- Mr. Prince Malik**
Osyrus Overseas, New Delhi
- Mr. Simrandeep Singh Kohli**
Sehaj Impex, New Delhi
- Mr. Rukshad Bhagwagar**
Forms, Nagpur
- Mr. Puneet Ahuja**
Ahujasons, New Delhi

Link to recording: https://youtu.be/9UD_C9a0XBU

12.00 Noon - 24th April 2020 (Friday)



Toyl
Toyl is a play kit that encourages children to transform everyday objects into toys, with components that can be added to household items such as cups, brushes and cans. Whether as family time or solo play, the kits are a great way to keep children occupied in homes of any size.

The 'Sleep Rock' natural sleeping aid is a simple yet effective solution for those who are looking to drift off to sleep without the need for a prescription. The device features a rock-like shape and texture that is intended to be held in the hand when heading to bed to satisfy a primitive need to keep something held tight throughout the night. The unit has an



A collaboration between jewelry and glass designer Anne Dorail and glass artist Vincent Chagnon brings us "Déballage ton sac" (Unpack your bag), a collection of unusual blown glass pieces each of which incorporates their individual talents.



the sector to come together and create a 'circular industry' where components and relevant ancillaries are available within

have assumed new importance now. "Life has moved beyond complications now. So it has become significant to adapt and most importantly connect to nature. That's what even our ultimate consumers are going through so let's make products that have a simple connect and appeal, make this new life easier and engaging. Such products with the strength of our design quotient will be embraced easily. Its time for small products with intricate details and in smaller quantities," he added.

reach. He also suggested that grassroots industry can be used and trained for packaging. Finally, he pointed out to the strength of India's domestic market and its consumer segments. He also urged the handicrafts fraternity to stay in their domain and work on improving that.

Views presented by the practical experts brought about several ideas and opened up many thought processes. Some of the extracts follow:

Mr. Ravi K Passi, Chairman, EPCH, said, life, the way of living, attitudes, convenience, safe, unsafe and all such things have newly defined meanings as things we took for granted

Mr. Rukshad Bhagwagar from Forms, Nagpur : The coming time will bring limitation of resources like money, labour, etc. that we took for granted till now. So, the edge we can offer will be in designing and if we stop that, we are finished. We should be conservative in scope to beat competition. That means,

be selective, take a narrow but sure and very focused approach on whatever you want to do. It's also important to think 'price conscious' and look at the appeal of simplicity. Develop watercolour sketches/drawings in sampling. Seeing these concepts, buyers can ask us for sampling. So, time & money can be saved by sending buyers, 10 sketches and asking them to choose 2. The buyer will not feel compromised as you have given so much choice. Work on your strength. Do what you do best not what others do (better). Buyers are going to come to specialists not generalists. Outthink China and stay a step ahead- we have to do things they cannot do not what they can do- or we will lose the battle. Start looking at utility items that will go faster. Be ready- if there is a glimmer of hope we must be prepared to do seasonal goods. People want styles that reflect home so stay with these themes. Add to that commitment to quality & value of price along with our USP of handcrafted feel that no other country can offer. Wisdom, caution and innovation will help us emerge as winners.

Mr. Prince Malik from Osyrus Overseas: Handicrafts are luxury items. This lockdown has taught us that. People are our resources, so with their abilities put together, do what is best in your domain with local raw materials. Work your strengths with focus on geographical, in terms of skills and raw materials. Work on 2021 and with existing buyers. Activate the communication channels more than ever. Let us not panic. Don't take hasty decisions. Make strategies for times when things will normalise. The new normal will be to handle people post lockdown, so be alert on consumer sentiment. Work on your checklist of do's and don'ts. Given a choice between luxury products & necessities, people will be inclined towards handmade, low cost and emotional or innovative features that add comfort & convenience to life. No time for experiments now. Have faith in your strengths, stay healthy and wellness. Stick to local sourcing.

Mr. Simrandeep Singh Kohli from Sehaj Impex, New Delhi: Journey of growth in business include trade shows, sampling, testing, etc. Guided by our expert design faculty and views of the panelists on the present scenario we feel uplifted and inspired. No time to despair now. Let's look at the Home Work we have from these learnings and start working on them. It is imperative now to stick to simple and elegant designs with locally available Indian raw material rather than China material. Let's focus on strengths and highlight our handmade & handcrafted USP. Quality

becomes paramount now and so does timely delivery. This is a time of opportunities too. So, if we miss the bus now, we will miss everything.

Mr. Rakesh Kumar, Director General, EPCH, said, "after hearing all these views, I can say, it's a straight message to all of you. Please be open to market. Take the Indian domestic market into serious consideration. It's the largest global market in the world after China! Get ready to market your products here. In fact, you have a large market here right now that has also gained in significance due to restrictions in imports and volatility in our traditional markets like USA and EU." He further said, "today less is more, in terms of designing and we will have to increase the unit value realisation of these by maximizing the craftsmanship on them. Don't think of mass production. We have to be very clear that the future is in 'handmade' and in solidarity with our skilled crafts persons," and emphasised that this is where our real strength lies. We have to strengthen our economy and safeguard the interests of our artisans. So, we have to stand for, demand and support 'Handmade in India.' The Director General, EPCH, also updated about the virtual show the Council is launching soon and urged all to put their best foot forward and encash on the opportunity.

Mr. Raj K Malhotra, Vice President, EPCH, appreciated the insightful and informative presentation as well as views of all the panelists calling them "all inclusive, covering practically all segments of this industry". He added, as gifts may be the last thing on a buyer/consumer's mind in these circumstances, let's think of innovative methods to convert our gifts into utility products, making them appealing decorative everyday products. Change in lifestyle has brought the 'home' to the core of everyday existence, so designing engaging products will help in the post COVID-19 times, he emphasised and concluded by urging all to embrace the change - in attitude, the way of working, way of doing business and most importantly, the way life is to be lived.

In the view of **Mr. R K Verma, Executive Director, EPCH,** the time has come for multi-use products. Home assumes a significant elevation so innovation for living and working from a home office assume renewed importance. Mr. Verma, like all the other panelists, emphasised on local raw material resources and cost effective production processes. It's time to intelligently use resources as they will be limited. ■

International Trade Risk Mitigation through ECGC

Link to recording: https://youtu.be/_OPnjr5a2vQ

28th April 2020: The ongoing pandemic crisis across the world has disrupted the business environment in an unprecedented manner. Businesses across sectors are suddenly finding themselves in the face of multiple challenges at the same time, including growing liquidity crunch, supply chain breakdowns, labour shortages and falling revenues due to depressed consumer demand. In such a scenario, exporters are facing manufacturing operations at home and payment risks from buyer's side. ECGC has stepped up to support the Indian export industry by providing policyholders relief measures like time limit extensions; waivers and reductions in fees; discretion to categorise uncleared shipments and more. This webinar was organised to update EPCH member exporters on these and also provide a Q&A session with the ECGC representative - guest faculty at the webinar, Mr. Saurabh Srivastava, Branch Manager, Delhi.

Moderated by **Mr. Rajesh Rawat, Joint Director, EPCH**, this webinar saw the presence of Chairman, EPCH, Mr. Ravi K Passi; Vice Chairman, EPCH, Mr. Raj K Malhotra; and Executive Director, EPCH, Mr. R K Verma. The trade panelists included Mr. Rajesh Kumar Jain, President, Social Media, EPCH; Mr. Nabeel Ahmad, COA Member, EPCH; Mr. Rishi Tulsyan of Deco De Trend, Chennai; and Mr. Ijlal Shamsi of Paramount Home Collections, Moradabad. This was attended by over 530 member exporters (registrations were over 680+ members) from PAN India.

Mr. Saurabh Srivastava, Branch Manager, ECGC, spoke of the various measures ECGC has taken for the COVID-19 situation, like extending time line for all returns upto 31st May 2020; timeline for claim, waiver of credit guarantee application fee till 30th June 2020; and 50% reduction in policy proposal fee for policies due to renewal from March 2020 to till 30th June 2020; to name a few. He also briefly touched upon ECGC's various schemes for the handicrafts export industry.

While speaking on the occasion, **Mr. Ravi K Passi, Chairman, EPCH**, said that ECGC should not take time to pay to the exporters on filing the application and urged Corporation to settle the claims at the earliest. **Mr. Raj Kumar Malhotra, Vice Chairman, EPCH**, suggested that ECGC should introduce ease of doing business as their terms for releasing payment to the affected exporters are very cumbersome and handicrafts sector belongs to small and

small and medium exporters who do not have such set up to comply with their terms. **Mr. R K Verma, Executive Director, EPCH**, "businesses all around the world are facing a tough situation and the webinar rightly deliberated on risks which the exporters face in international business, specific to the payment from overseas buying community and in order to mitigate the risks, ECGC provides various policy covers to small and medium exporters to safeguard them from such risks." He appreciated that under the circumstances, ECGC has modified its policies to provide support to Indian exporters. **Mr. Rajesh Kumar Jain, President, Social Media, EPCH**, said that taking of ECGC cover is very important to save the business set up with hard earned money. He also said that in the recent past, due to cancellation of orders by very creditworthy buyers, exporters who had taken ECGC cover are feeling secure and those who did not are facing difficulty. **Mr. Rishi Tulsyan of Deco De Trend, Chennai** the expert if there was any provision to provide cover before the shipment and how ECGC will cope up with credit worthiness of the buyers who are cancelling their orders. **Mr. Nabeel Ahmad, COA Member, EPCH**, spoke about ease of doing business by ECGC, pre-shipment cover, cover for new buyers and also provision of SOP for air shipments. **Mr. Ijlal Shamsi from Paramount Home Collections, Moradabad** advised for portal where exporters can register the name of buyers and data of defaulted buyers should be maintained as well. ■

PANELISTS



Mr. Saurabh Srivastava
Branch Manager, ECGC



Mr. Rajesh Kumar Jain
Exmart International
New Delhi



Mr. Nabeel Ahmad
Nawab Regency
Moradabad



Mr. Rishi Tulsyan
Deco De Trend
Chennai



Mr. Ijlal Shamsi
Paramount Home Collections
Moradabad

COVID-19: Threat or Opportunity for Handicraft Exporters

Link to recording: https://youtu.be/_2wmPy2P490

10th April 2020: While on one hand when Coronavirus has become a global issue from the health perspective, it has equally passed on its trickle-down effect on the global economy. Having emerged from China, it is now seen as a possible threat; the buying preferences seem to be shifting in favour of mass-producing countries like India. This is expected to bring up immense export opportunities for India against China with the anti-China sentiment growing. On the other hand, it might also bring in the challenge for sectors that are import-dependent on



Mr. Rakesh Kumar, Director General, EPCH; Mr. Raj K Malhotra, Vice Chairman, EPCH; expert faculty, Dr. Tamanna Chaturvedi from IIFT, New Delhi; Mr. Rajat Asthana, eminent exporter from Agra; Mr. Kamal Soni, COA Member, EPCH; Mr. Naved-ur-Rehman, Vice Chairman, EPCH; and Mr. RK Verma, Executive Director, EPCH

China wherein Indian companies had to immediately look for reducing their import dependence on China and look for alternate sources. This webinar highlighted the



emerging opportunities and challenges for the handicraft sector, particularly of Uttar Pradesh in sectors including metalware, woodware, glassware and stoneware. The objective was to provide the required knowledge and guidance to the stakeholders who are engaged in the sector in this region.

With expert faculty, Dr. Tamanna Chaturvedi from IIFT, New Delhi, this session was also addressed by Mr. Ravi K Passi, Chairman, EPCH; Vice Chairmen, EPCH - Mr. Raj K Malhotra and Mr. Naved ur Rehman; Director General, EPCH, Mr. Rakesh Kumar; and Executive Director, EPCH, Mr. R K Verma. It was attended by 115 member exporters from Uttar Pradesh and Delhi NCR including COA members of the Council.

Dr. Tamanna Chaturvedi, in her presentation indicated that this is not the time to be sad and worry but take concrete action and plan for the time that will emerge post COVID-19. There will be tremendous shift in the business as market and buyer requirements will go through a sea change, influenced by how consumers view the world amidst this pandemic. Dr. Chaturvedi was of the view that handicraft exporters should focus on new markets like LAC and African countries, plan future strategies to cope up with the handicrafts export target, e-Commerce, post COVID handicraft export compliances which may be required by the buyers, etc. She urged the exporters to get ready to service buyers who will definitely look for other alternatives to China