

Shri Giriraj Singh, Hon'ble Union Textiles Minister Inaugurates Skill Development Program on Water Hyacinth Craft at Lakhanpur, Begusarai, Bihar



11th April 2025: Shri Giriraj Singh, Hon'ble Minister of Textiles, Government of India, inaugurated a Skill Development Program on Water Hyacinth Craft at Lakhanpur, Begusarai, Bihar. He emphasised its dual focus of empowering artisans through skill development and promoting sustainability in crafts. He expressed that the initiative would not remain confined to Begusarai but would be expanded across Bihar and the country after its successful implementation.

Shri Singh commended EPCH and the O/o Development Commissioner (Handicrafts), Ministry of Textiles, for organising the program, which aims to train over 200 artisans. Highlighting the abundance of water hyacinth in Bihar, he urged women artisans to use this sustainable resource to create household as well as decorative products and encouraged local entrepreneurs to support artisans in accessing domestic and international markets.

The inauguration ceremony witnessed the presence of several dignitaries, including Shri Surender Mehta, Sports Minister Govt. of Bihar; Shri Kundan Kumar, MLA, Begusarai; Shri Raj Kumar Singh, MLA, Matihani; Shri Keshav Sandilya, Sr. Leader BJP; Shri Rudal Roy, District President, JDU; Shri Rajeev Kumar Verma, District President, BJP; Smt. Amrit Raj, Development Commissioner (Handicrafts), Ministry of Textiles; Shri Avinash Kumar, DPM, Jeevika Begusarai; and Mr. Rajesh Rawat, Addl. Executive Director, EPCH along with senior officers of Govt. of India, industry leaders, artisans and media representatives.

The Water Hyacinth Handicraft Project is an innovative initiative aimed at addressing an environmental challenge by converting invasive water hyacinths into valuable handicraft products. The



project envisions community empowerment through sustainable livelihood creation, especially for women artisans. The O/o DC (Handicrafts) has appointed EPCH as the implementing partner and M/s Creative Bee as technical partner for this initiative. The project spans four months - two months dedicated to skill development followed by two months focused on design and product development. By equipping artisans with the necessary

skills and tools to create marketable handicrafts, the initiative aims to turn a natural challenge into a livelihood opportunity, promoting both environmental sustainability and rural economic development.

Mr. Dileep Baid, Chairman, EPCH, said, the training would empower artisans to convert this invasive weed into eco-friendly, marketable products, contributing to income generation and the vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat. Mr. Rajesh Rawat, Addl. Executive Director, EPCH, added that this is the second major initiative in Bihar under the Hon'ble Minister's guidance, following the opening of the EPCH office in Patna. He extended gratitude for the continued support in promoting handicrafts and artisan empowerment in the state. ■

EPCH participates in High-Level Meeting Chaired by Shri Piyush Goyal, Union Minister of Commerce & Industry to address U.S. Reciprocal Tariffs on Indian Exports

10th April 2025: Shri Piyush Goyal, Hon'ble Union Minister of Commerce & Industry, Govt. of India met industry leaders from EPCs/Associations. EPCH was represented by Dr. Neeraj Khanna, Vice Chairman, EPCH along with Mr. R K Verma, Executive Director, EPCH and Mr. Rajesh Rawat, Addl. Executive Director EPCH.



The objective of the meeting was to bring together Trade Associations, Export Promotion Councils and policymakers to discuss issues and suggestions on the impact of U.S. Reciprocal Tariffs on Indian exports and mitigation strategies. During the meeting, Dr. Neeraj Khanna, Vice Chairman, EPCH, submitted the emerging challenges and potential impacts of recent tariff measures imposed by the United States on Indian handicraft

exports. He urged the Government of India to prioritise trade negotiations with the U.S. to resolve the tariff issue, pursue a longer grace period for the implementation of reciprocal tariffs with the U.S. and highlighted support to negotiate bilateral trade agreement consider an Emergency fund/Incentive Support Package, Re-introduce MEIS Benefits and others.■

Aussies are choosing to shop local this Christmas

Many consumers will shop local this year compared to previous years due to cost of living pressures, costly parking fees and lack of shopper convenience. According to Vicki Leavy, general manager of JMK Retail, local shopping centres are attracting more shoppers as consumers opt for convenience.

"Our numbers are already showing a marked increase in foot traffic and retail sales across the board in the lead up to Christmas," she says. "It is clear that consumers want to shop local and they see better value and convenience in the offerings available close to home." Community based shopping centres have also experienced a strong resurgence due to their strategic repositioning in the market. They have readjusted their market positioning and upscaled in terms of look, feel, ambience, quality, layout and offerings.

"This has helped local shopping centres attract a better mix of retailers and brands while also incorporating more lifestyle offerings such as health, wellness and casual dining." "While shopping, they can also combine their retail therapy with a night out at outdoor dining precincts. Our centres are offering free children's festive activities as well so parents can relax and enjoy themselves while



the kids are entertained. Local shopping is now a comprehensive lifestyle offering that city based retail precincts cannot compete with." Local shopping centres often feature boutique stores, artisan goods and unique items. From handcrafted gifts to exclusive products, local centres offer treasures that add a personal touch to your purchases, she says. "Shopping locally means supporting small businesses and local entrepreneurs. These stores are the heart of the community and every dollar spent helps boost the local economy, create jobs and sustain the vibrancy of your neighbourhood and broader community."■

Source: giftguideonline.com.au

Regional Convenor, NER, visits Mizoram, meets officials of 'Commerce and Industries' and Entrepreneurs of the state



13th March 2025: EPCH Regional Convenor, NER, Ms. Jesmina Zeliang visited Aizawl, Mizoram, and had a meeting with the officials of 'Commerce and Industries' and Entrepreneurs of Mizoram. The meeting was successfully completed; attended by Ms. Maria CT Zuali (Director) and Ms. Matawli (Deputy Director) of Commerce and Industries, Mr. Zara of Bamboo Development Agency along with eight entrepreneurs of Mizoram. After completion of the program, few entrepreneurs of Aizawl were also visited in their showroom/store. ■

EPCH Delegation Engages with Confederation of Women Entrepreneurs of India, encourages their entrepreneurial participation in global handicraft exports

27th March 2025: Mr. Prince Malik, Member, COA, EPCH, along with Mr. Rajesh Rawat, Additional Executive Director, EPCH, met with the Confederation of Women Entrepreneurs of India, an NGO based in New Delhi, to explore opportunities for empowering women entrepreneurs to become successful handicraft exporters. The discussion focused on understanding their capabilities and addressing the



challenges they face in transitioning from domestic markets to international ventures.

Mr. Prince Malik also extended an invitation to the members to visit the IHGF Spring Fair, scheduled from 16th to 19th April 2025. ■