

# EPCH seeks Government Intervention on European Union Deforestation Regulations (EUDR) to Safeguard Indian Wooden Handicrafts Exports

## Council's delegation calls on Shri Bhupender Yadav, Hon'ble Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Govt. of India



*Delegation of wooden handicrafts exporters led by Mr. Sagar Mehta, Vice Chairman, EPCH, along with Mr. Tanmay Kumar, Secretary, MoEFCC; Mr. Sushil Kumar Awasthi, DG Forest; industry representatives including Mr. Hansraj Baheti, COA Member, EPCH; Mr. Naresh Bothra, President, Jodhpur Handicrafts Exporters Federation; Mr. Raunak Parakh, member exporter from Jodhpur, Mr. Mohd. Ausaf, General Secretary, Saharanpur Wood Carving Manufacturers Association; Mr. Anwar Ahmed, member exporter from Saharanpur; Mr. Sachin Raj Jain, Convenor, Network for Certification and Conservation of Forests: NCCF; along with Mr. R K Verma, Executive Director, EPCH; and Mr. Rajesh Rawat, Addl. Executive Director, EPCH, meeting Shri Bhupender Yadav, Hon'ble Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Govt. of India*

**1st September 2025, New Delhi:** A Delegation of wooden handicraft exporters led by Mr. Sagar Mehta, Vice Chairman, EPCH, met with Shri Bhupender Yadav, Hon'ble Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Govt. of India, to discuss challenges arising from the European Union Deforestation Regulation (EUDR).

The meeting was attended by Mr. Tanmay Kumar, Secretary, MoEFCC; Mr. Sushil Kumar Awasthi, DG Forest; industry representatives including Mr. Hansraj Baheti, COA Member, EPCH; Mr. Naresh Bothra, President, Jodhpur Handicrafts Exporters Federation; Mr. Raunak Parakh, member exporter from Jodhpur, Mr. Mohd. Ausaf, General Secretary, Saharanpur Wood Carving Manufacturers Association; Mr. Anwar Ahmed, member exporter from Saharanpur; Mr. Sachin Raj Jain, Convenor, Network for Certification and Conservation of Forests: NCCF; along with Mr. R K Verma, Executive Director, EPCH; and Mr. Rajesh Rawat, Addl. Executive Director, EPCH.

EPCH's Vice Chairman apprised the Hon'ble Minister of the sector's export performance and highlighted that EUDR's stringent compliance requirements could adversely impact small and medium exporters. He urged the government for a coordinated national response and constructive engagement seeking an inter-ministerial committee between MoEFCC, MoAFW, MoC&I, Ministry of Textiles/Development Commissioner (Handicrafts) and DGFT to deliver a digital traceability/geo-location framework with a



centralised documentation system; direct state forest departments to capture plot geo-coordinates and felling volumes and make working plans accessible; launching a National Timber Portal System linked to the VRIKSH scheme; publish a licensed sawmill registry with geo-coordinates and deferment or suitable exemptions for wooden handicrafts made from agroforestry based wood such as Mango, Acacia and Sheesham. Mr. R K Verma, Executive Director, EPCH said, "EPCH has always been committed towards aligning with global sustainability frameworks through initiatives like 'Vriksh' Timber Legality Assessment and Verification Scheme, an internationally recognised system that assures the legality and sustainability of wood sourcing. However, large-scale implementation of georeferenced traceability systems requires policy support, funding and international engagement. This collective approach will ensure compliance while safeguarding India's export competitiveness." ■

## Meeting of Hon'ble Minister of Commerce & Industry with EPCs on Strategies to Enhance Exports and Address Trade Challenges

**3rd September 2025:** A meeting was convened under the Chairmanship of the Hon'ble Minister of Commerce & Industry, Shri Piyush Goyal, with Export Promotion Councils (EPCs) to deliberate on strategies for enhancing exports and to address prevailing geopolitical and international trade challenges, including the issue of US reciprocal tariffs.

EPCH was represented by Mr. Ravi K Passi and Mr. Rajesh Jain, COA members, EPCH, along with Mr. Rajesh Rawat, Additional Executive Director, EPCH.

During the deliberations, EPCH highlighted several critical measures to mitigate the adverse impact of US reciprocal tariffs. These included provision of 30% Cost Equalization Assistance for exports to the USA, continuation of the Interest Equalization Scheme, revival of the Section 80HHC Income Tax benefit, grant of a moratorium on loan repayments, constitution of a multi-ministerial Sub-Committee on EUDR, and duty-free import of inputs under the IGCR Scheme.



*EPCH was represented by Mr. Ravi K Passi and Mr. Rajesh Jain, COA members, EPCH, along with Mr. Rajesh Rawat, Additional Executive Director, EPCH*

The Hon'ble Minister gave a patient hearing and assured that the Government remains fully committed to extending all possible support to MSMEs, including the handicrafts sector. ■

## EPCH Urges Extension of Export realization period to 360-Days – without penal interest, Requests Moratorium period on loans to MSMEs

**8th September 2025:** EPCH has urged for immediate relief measures to preserve liquidity and competitiveness for India's handicraft exporters amid extended buyer payment cycles and global headwinds. In the current scenario, delays in realisation of export proceeds are common and often beyond the control of exporters.

Highlighting exporters' concern Dr. Neeraj Khanna, Chairman, EPCH, shared, "handicrafts exporters are contending with a challenging global environment marked by geopolitical tensions, reciprocal tariffs in key markets, elevated logistics costs and uncertain demand factors that are extending buyer payment cycles beyond exporters control. Under current norms, realisation beyond 270 days attracts penal interest, creating avoidable stress precisely when working capital is most constrained. EPCH urges for a relief framework that sets out a 360-day export proceeds realisation window with uniform

AD-bank implementation with waiver of penal interest on substantiated delays."

Dr. Rakesh Kumar, Director General in the role of Chief Mentor, EPCH and Chairman, IEML shared, "continuing our engagement with policymakers to keep MSME exporters competitive, we have requested a coordinated relief package with the Government of India which includes extending credit realisation timelines and one-year moratorium covering both principal and interest on other loans." He further added, "exporters are battling an unprecedented situation marked by high tariffs, shipment delays and rising costs. Without timely policy support, even fundamentally strong businesses risk being classified as NPAs. Extending credit realisation timelines and granting a moratorium on loan repayments will give exporters the flexibility to diversify markets, comply with new regulations and continue contributing to India's foreign exchange earnings." ■



## Hon'ble Textiles Minister Engages with Industry Leaders on Export Challenges

**9th September 2025:** Shri Giriraj Singh, Hon'ble Union Minister of Textiles, Government of India, held a meeting with industry leaders from Textile EPCs and Industry Associations.

EPCH was represented by Mr. Sagar Mehta, Vice Chairman, EPCH; Mr. Prince Mallik, COA Member, EPCH; and Mr. Rajesh Rawat, Additional Executive Director, EPCH.

The meeting aimed to bring together Trade Associations, Export Promotion Councils, and policymakers to deliberate on pressing issues

and explore mitigation strategies to boost India's exports. During the discussions, Mr. Sagar Mehta, Vice Chairman, EPCH, presented an overview of the sector's export performance and highlighted that the recent U.S. tariff has dealt a major setback to the handicrafts sector. To address this unprecedented challenge, he urged the Government to consider urgent measures such as, Introduction of a 30% Cost Equalisation Incentive; Enhanced benefits under the Interest Equalisation Scheme; Income Tax exemptions in line with erstwhile Section 80HHC of the Income Tax Act; Extension of the export realisation period from 180 to 360 days (without penal

charges); Moratorium on loan repayments; Encouraging corporate gifting of handicrafts in the domestic market; Support for overseas warehousing and cash & carry models; Relaxation under Section



*EPCH was represented by Mr. Sagar Mehta, Vice Chairman, EPCH; Mr. Prince Mallik, COA Member, EPCH; and Mr. Rajesh Rawat, Additional Executive Director, EPCH; Below seen with Mr. Rohit Kansal, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Textiles, Govt of India; and Mrs. Shubhra, Trade Advisor, Ministry of Textiles, Govt. of India*



43B of the Income Tax Act; and Active engagement with the European Union to resolve issues related to the EUDR. Mr. Prince Mallik further emphasised the need to incentivise export promotion efforts in BRICS countries, highlighting them as key emerging markets. The Hon'ble Minister gave a patient hearing and assured due consideration. ■



## Secretary, Textiles, visits Kashmir to engage with exporters, Artisans and Industry Bodies



**9th September 2025:** Ms. Neelam Shami Rao, Secretary, Ministry of Textiles, Government of India, visited Kashmir and interacted with representatives of the business community, exporters, artisans and industry bodies.

The objective was to bring together Trade Associations, exporters, artisans and policymakers to discuss issues and explore mitigation strategies to enhance exports from India.

EPCH was represented by Mr. Arshad Mir, prominent member exporter from J&K and past chairman HCSSC who gave an overview of the sector's export

performance and shared the sector's immediate concerns on behalf of the handicrafts and textile ecosystem. ■

## Meeting on GST Reforms and Implementation under the Chairmanship of CBIC Chairman

**10th September 2025:** A meeting was convened under the chairmanship of Mr. Sanjay Kumar Agarwal, Chairman, Central Board of Indirect Taxes & Customs (CBIC), to deliberate on GST reforms, rate rationalisation, and their implementation. EPCH was represented by Mr. Prince Malik, COA Member, EPCH; and Mr. Rajesh Rawat, Additional Executive Director, EPCH. The discussions focused on various aspects of GST reforms and their implications for the handicraft sector. ■



## EPCH Leadership Honoured with National Atal Award for Outstanding Contributions to Handicrafts Sector and Social Service

*Mr. Avdesh Agarwal, Chief Convenor, EPCH; Mr. Naved Ur Rehman, President MHEA & Co-opted COA Member, EPCH; and Mr. Rajesh Rawat, Addl. Executive Director, EPCH, being conferred with the prestigious National Atal Award by Dr. Satyanarayan Jatiya, Former Minister, Mr. Shyam Jaju, Chief Patron Atal Foundation; Mr. Avinash Rai Khanna, Member, Parliamentary Committee; Mr. Lekhraj Maheshwari, National Advisor, Atal Foundation; and Mr. Radhe Shyam Ranga, Secretary, Atul Foundation, during the Atal National Awards ceremony*



**19th September 2025:** EPCH is proud to share that three of its distinguished leaders—Mr. Avdesh Agarwal, Chief Convenor, EPCH; Mr. Naved Ur Rehman, President MHEA & Co-opted CoA Member, EPCH; and Mr. Rajesh Rawat, Addl. Executive Director, EPCH, have been conferred with the prestigious National Atal Award in recognition of their exceptional contributions to social service and their relentless efforts in promoting India's handicrafts sector at both national and international platforms. The award was presented by Dr. Satyanarayan Jatiya, Former Minister, Mr. Shyam Jaju, Chief Patron Atal Foundation; Mr. Avinash Rai Khanna, Member, Parliamentary Committee; Mr. Lekhraj Maheshwari, National Advisor, Atal Foundation; and Mr. Radhe Shyam Ranga, Secretary, Atul Foundation, during the Atal National Awards ceremony.

Dr. Neeraj Khanna, Chairman, EPCH shared, "this recognition of our colleagues is a proud moment for the entire handicrafts fraternity. Mr. Avdesh Agarwal has played a pivotal role in steering EPCH's

strategic initiatives as Chief Convenor, advocating for artisan welfare and supporting exporters while strengthening India's global presence in handicrafts. Mr. Naved Ur Rehman has been instrumental in promoting Indian handicrafts in new markets, fostering innovation, and inspiring the younger generation of artisans and entrepreneurs to carry forward India's craft heritage. Mr. Rajesh Rawat, through his dedicated service as Additional Executive Director, has significantly contributed to policy advocacy, trade facilitation and the organisation of flagship events such as the IHGF Delhi Fair, ensuring wider visibility for India's handicraft exports at the international level."

Mr. R K Verma, Executive Director, EPCH, said, "The National Atal Awards celebrates excellence in various fields, honouring individuals who embody the spirit and values of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee. This recognition for EPCH leaders underscores the sector's crucial role in sustaining livelihoods, preserving heritage, and contributing significantly to India's export growth." ■