

SPEECH

BY

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UNION MINISTER OF TEXTILES

ON THE OCCASION OF
THE INAUGURATION OF
THE MASTER CREATION, 2009

AT

DILLI HAAT

ON

09.12.2009 AT 12.15 P.M.

My Colleague Tmt. Panabaaka Lakshmi, Minister of State for Textiles

Tmt. Rita Menon, Secretary, Ministry of Textiles

Dr. J. N. Singh, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Textiles

Thiru Sanjay Agarwal, Development Commissioner for Handicrafts

Artisans and invited guests,

Friends in the Media,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Handicrafts represent the rich, traditional and diverse cultural heritage of the country. Their cultural importance pertains to preservation of heritage, traditional skills and talent. And economic importance lies in their high employment potential, low capital investment, high value addition, and potential for export and foreign exchange earnings. The Sector provides employment to an estimated 65 lakh artisans, of whom 47% are females, 25% belong to Scheduled Castes, and 12% to Scheduled Tribes.

I am happy to be a part of Handicraft Week Celebration which had commenced yesterday and will culminate on December 15, 2009. I am enthralled to see and feel the Master Creations of around 200 Shilp Gurus, National Awardees and National Merit Certificate Holders in the handicraft and handloom sectors. It is a unique event where the connoisseur and layman can feel and buy exquisite products of master craftsmen. The product range represents the essence of our handcrafted tradition.

It gives me immense satisfaction to distribute insurance claim cheques to the beneficiaries of the Rajiv Gandhi Shilpi Swasthya Bima Yojana. So far, approximately 20 lakh artisans have been covered under the scheme and by the year 2012, it is expected, approximately 40 lakh artisans will be covered under the scheme. It is one of the most comprehensive schemes wherein facility for outpatient services is provided to the artisans to give a complete package of health cover.

I am happy to learn that the second phase of activities will cover Kolkata, Mumbai, Chennai, Lucknow and Guwahati and that Craft Awareness Programmes will be organized at school level to sensitize and disseminate information about our traditional heritage to impressionable minds. In addition, artisans will be exposed to innovative designs by the Regional Design and Technical Development Centres through Design Development Workshops.

I am told that as a part of the Handicraft Week, a workshop will be organized in each of the identified 60 districts to propagate information about different schemes being implemented for the welfare of the artisans. During the workshop, a health camp will be organized where artisans will be medically examined free of cost and reimbursement claim cheques will be distributed to the beneficiaries. This is a laudable step.

Friends, the Ministry is implementing six schemes for the holistic growth and development of the handicraft sector. We have adopted cluster based developmental approach where we provide infrastructural support, design inputs and market linkages to the artisans to enable them to produce contemporary and marketable products. We are developing four handicraft mega clusters at Moradabad, Narsapur, Srinagar and Badhoi. The work at Moradabad and Narsapur has commenced and work at Srinagar and Badhoi will commence shortly. Under the Baba Saheb Ambedkar Hasthashilp Vikas Yojana, the Ministry is following cluster based approach. Around 400 cluster projects are being implemented across the country covering 1.20 lakh artisans. I would like to advise the Development Commissioner to explore the possibility to organize an exclusive exhibition of these cluster products.

The availability of timely Credit is an important factor affecting the growth of the sector. We are committed to facilitate the credit supply. Dedicated camps are being organized across the country by the Office of the Development Commissioner for Handicrafts to help you in filling up of the credit card forms. Banks are being made partners so that the credit availability becomes easier. Already around 80,000 forms have been filled around the country.

Friends, we have launched e-marketing portal for Indian Handicrafts and Handlooms products. 1500 contemporary designs have been hosted on the web sites of the office of Development Commissioner for Handlooms and National Institute of Fashion Technology. These designs are free, downloadable with technical details and regional language interface. I sincerely hope, this initiative will empower you to innovate, produce contemporary products and help in sustaining and capturing market, both domestic and international.

I request you to take advantage of all the schemes and participate actively in the different activities. Without your participation, our efforts are meaningless. Let us join hands to preserve our heritage which is unique to our country.

Thank you.