

# Textile mills plan production halt for a day

Feel the government is neglecting them; move may cost industry around ₹6,000 cr

LN REVATHY

Coimbatore, August 9

Spinning mills across the country are proposing production stoppage for a day to draw the attention of the government to the industry's plight and stress the need for right policy initiatives.

## Neglected sector

In a hurriedly convened meeting of its executive committee here last week, the Southern India Mills Association (SIMA) decided to take this extreme step, as the members perceived that

the sector is being neglected by the government.

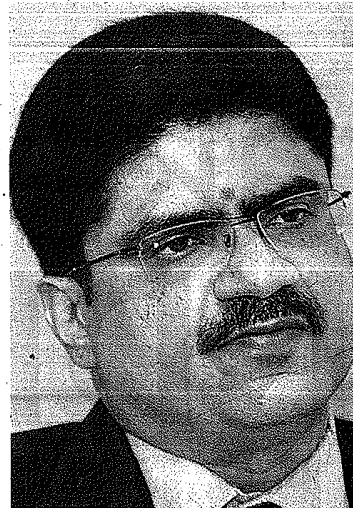
Recalling the association's earlier call for production halt in 2008, K Selvaraju, Secretary General, SIMA, said "we took the lead then to impress upon the then government the need for withdrawal of 14 per cent import duty on cotton. A similar attempt is being made now to highlight the present plight of the sector."

A day's production halt is expected cost the industry roughly ₹6,000 crore, notwithstanding the loss to the exchequer.

The mills are also contemplating a production cut of 15 to 20 per cent in the short run, in consultation with the spinning mills located in other parts of the country

## Struggling to survive

Lamenting the stepmotherly treatment meted out to the textile sector, T Rajkumar, Chair-



T Rajkumar, Chairman, SIMA

man, SIMA, said the sector has huge potential for exports, but due to lack of support from the Centre, the industry is struggling to sustain and survive. "If the government holds a deaf ear even now, a good number of units will be forced to down shutters, rendering thousands jobless," he said.

The Association has sought government's attention to allo-

cate ₹6,500 crore to clear all pending TUF subsidies, extend Merchant Export Incentivisation Scheme till the FIAs are signed, implement GST and announce a National Textile Policy without further delay.

"The industry has been facing yet another long-drawn recession for the last 15 months. Spinning and powerloom sectors are the worst affected. Though various State governments have announced attractive textile policies, these have become a major threat for the existing capacities to compete with new capacities being created.

"In the absence of a level playing field (due to higher rates of duties for Indian textile products in international markets), higher raw material cost, high cost of funding and transaction cost, the industry will not be in a position to achieve its potential growth rate.

## Global recession

"Policy initiatives at this juncture is crucial to strengthen the

competitiveness of the Indian textile industry," the SIMA chief said. He pointed out that global recession had pushed the Indian textile industry to the corner and the country had become the least preferred nation in textile trade due to higher rates of duties.

Rajkumar further said that the synthetic textile manufacturers were also in a bad shape as huge volumes of yarns and fabrics were imported from countries like China, Indonesia and Thailand.

"High levies of over 20 per cent on synthetic fibres apart from the anti-dumping duty did not allow the Indian synthetic industry to grow," he said and appealed for immediate withdrawal of the anti-dumping duties and reduction of central excise duty from 12.5 per cent to 6 per cent.

The industry will be able to sustain and not require any incentive if a level playing field is created on tariff rates, raw material cost, cost of funding and transaction cost, Rajkumar said.

T Rajkumar, Chairman, SIMA, said the synthetic textile manufacturers were also in a bad shape as huge volumes of yarns and fabrics were imported from countries like China, Indonesia and Thailand

## SIMA demands level-playing field for domestic textile sector

**NEW DELHI:** Asserting that the domestic textile industry is facing recession for the last 15 months, Southern India Mills' Association (SIMA) has appealed to the Centre to take immediate steps to create a level-playing field for the sector.

"In the absence of a level-playing field, due to higher rates of duties for Indian textile products in various major international markets, higher raw material cost, high cost of funding and high transaction cost, the industry is not in a position to achieve its potential growth rate."

"Under these circumstances, it is very essential for the central government to come out with a policy initiative to strengthen the competitiveness of the Indian textile industry," SIMA said. The measures include making raw material of both cotton and synthetic fibres available at a slightly lower or on par with international price.

At a press meet on Saturday, SIMA Chairman T. Rajkumar also appealed for expediting free trade agreements (FTAs) with all the major textile importing countries particularly China and EU and make the tariff rate slightly lower or on par with other competing nations.

He requested the Centre to allocate Rs.6,500 crore to clear all pending cases and the existing committed liabilities of the Technology Upgradation Fund Scheme (TUFS), and to announce National Textile Policy at the earliest.

Mr. Rajkumar also pitched for early rollout of GST and requested the government to bring textile products under lowest rate of GST as the textile industry is low profit margin industry. — PTI

**Textile sector:** Asserting that the domestic textile industry is facing recession, Southern India Mills' Association has appealed to the Centre to take immediate steps to create a level-playing field for the sector. **PTI**

## खादी को मिला बिग-बी का साथ, बने ब्रांड एंबेसडर

नई दिल्ली (आईएनएस)। प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी के बाद अब खादी को बिग-बी का साथ भी मिलेगा। पीएम की अपील पर खादी की बिक्री में आई तेजी में महानायक अमिताभ बच्चन और जान फूंकेंगे। खादी का ब्रांड एंबेसडर बनने के लिए अमिताभ ने सहमति जता दी है। जल्द ही वे देश के परंपरागत ब्रांड को प्रमोट करते नजर आएंगे। खास बात यह है कि वह इसके लिए कोई फीस नहीं लेंगे।

खादी और ग्रामीण उद्योग आयोग (केवीआईसी) के सीईओ अरुण कुमार ने बताया कि अमिताभ बच्चन ने 'प्रो बोनो' (निस्वार्थ) खादी का ब्रांड एंबेसडर बनने की सहमति दी है। यानी इसके लिए वे कोई शुल्क नहीं लेंगे। पिछले महीने अमिताभ ने इसके लिए

रजामंदी दी थी। यह उद्योग के लिए बहुत बड़ी बात है। उन्होंने कहा कि पिछले साल अक्टूबर में प्रधानमंत्री की ओर से रेडियो कार्यक्रम 'मन की बात' में खादी का इस्तेमाल बढ़ाने की अपील के बाद इसकी बिक्री में इजाफा हुआ है। उनकी अपील के बाद ही खादी के अधिक उपभोक्ता अनुकूल और डिजाइनर उत्पाद बाजार में लाए जा रहे हैं। सेंट्रल दिल्ली के आउटलेट में खादी की बिक्री में 60 फीसद तक की बढ़ोतरी हुई है। केवीआईसी ने जून में युवाओं के लिए खादी की नई रेंज में डेनिम जींस से लेकर टी-शर्ट, जैकेट तक बाजार में लांच किए थे।



MINT, Delhi

Monday 10th August 2015, Page: 15

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## ARVIND

BUY



We expect revival in urban sentiments to drive growth in **Arvind Ltd's** brand and retail segment resulting in 14-15% revenue on a compounded annual growth rate basis over FY15-17. We expect and expansion in the company's earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortization margins.

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## ILLEGAL RECYCLING

# The inside story of crackdown, reforms in the jute bag industry

By ANIEK PAUL  
aniek.p@livemint.com

KOLKATA

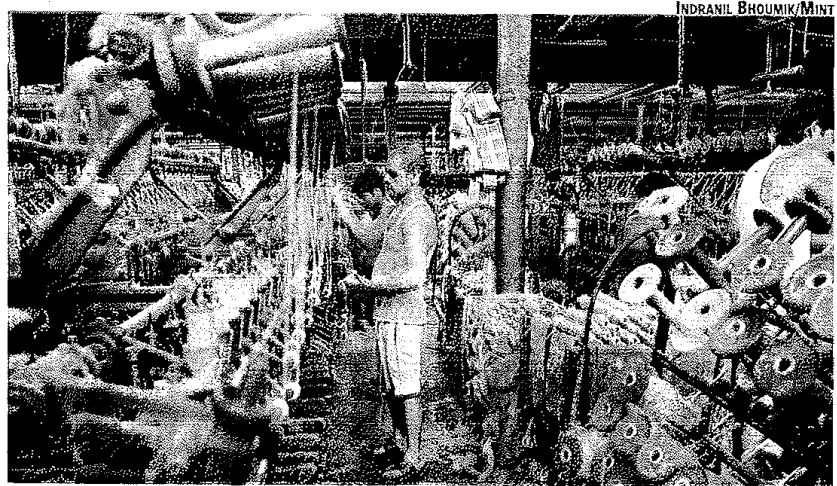
On a Monday morning, while others are just about settling in, deputy jute commissioner Dipankar Mahto is fighting an unequal battle from his office in Kolkata's Salt Lake CGO complex. His immediate adversary is a senior lawyer in Hyderabad, who declines to appear for the jute commissioner's office unless a part of his fee is paid in advance.

Mahto tries to explain to the lawyer over the phone that he must first raise a bill, and that at any government office, it normally takes a few days to "process" a payment, but the lawyer will have none of it.

It's only going to take two-three days, and the jute commissioner's office is to pay his fees in full at one go, Mahto says, but the lawyer refuses to budge.

At stake is a truck full of evidence carrying an innocuous cargo of 30,000 empty jute bags. Its invoiced worth is only ₹6 lakh, but in Mahto's war against jute mill owners, it is a potential game changer.

At the instruction of the jute commissioner, the truck had



INDRANIL BHOUK/MINT

**New regulation:** Under a procurement programme, only new jute bags of 665gm each could until now be bought to pack 50kg of foodgrains.

been detained a few days earlier by the police in Adilabad in Telangana, but the local administration is "only too keen" to release it, Mahto says. The only way to restrain them is by obtaining a court order, and though Mahto has a strong case, the order isn't easily coming by.

After several impassioned attempts to convince the lawyer about the importance of the detained truck in the ongoing crackdown against corruption, Mahto surrenders to the cliché: "you should never take your job too seriously".

After all, for all stakeholders here except the jute commis-

sioner's office, the incentives for having the truck released are far greater than can be matched by paying only legitimate legal fees, Mahto says in disgust.

Spearheaded by Mahto, the jute commissioner's office has over the past few months launched a crackdown on one of the industry's worst-kept secrets: the illegitimate recycling of used jute bags. It shortchanges the government, tens of thousands of workers and farmers, and even "compliant" producers.

Intensive policing by the jute commissioner's office has

TURN TO PAGE 4



# The inside story of crackdown, reforms in the jute bag industry

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revealed that a section of mill owners routinely recycle used jute bags and sell them under the government's procurement programme, which has an annual outlay of ₹4,500-5,000 crore.

But that's just one of the several malpractices that mill owners resort to for better margins.

## The malaise

Under the procurement programme, aimed at protecting the livelihoods of some 250,000-300,000 jute mill workers and an estimated 3.5-4 million jute farmers against the rapid onslaught of plastic bags, only new jute bags of 665gm each could until now be bought to pack 50kg of foodgrains.

There's an elaborate process to ensure compliance with the mandated standards; but recent investigations have revealed that there are gaping holes in the supply chain through which new bags leak out and are replaced with used ones.

The new ones that leak out—such as those said to be laden in the truck detained at Adilabad—return to the mills and are sold again.

To be sure, jute bags are sturdy and recyclable—according to some lifecycle studies, for up to seven times—but with every use, their quality diminishes. Considering the not-so-tender handling, only new bags are suitable for packing foodgrains.

Because they are able to sell the same bag over and over again, a section of mill owners falsify production figures. They take advantage of the government's procurement programme, but produce much less than what they officially claim in their books.

It has a cascading effect, says jute commissioner Subrata Gupta—Mahto's boss. Because this "game of recycling" hasn't been firmly dealt with until now, several mills have surreptitiously scaled back production, which, in turn, has impacted employment as well as the farmers further up in the supply chain, according to Gupta.

"In the jute sector, if you measure efficiency by the conventional yardsticks, the most efficient mills are the ones that are low on production," says Gupta.



**Ripple effect:** Illegitimate recycling of used jute bags shortchanges the government, tens of thousands of workers and farmers, and even 'compliant' producers.

Compounding the problem of illegitimate recycling, cheaper bags and sacking fabric (from which bags are made) are being dumped into India by Bangladesh and Nepalese manufacturers. These aren't inferior in quality, but buying them doesn't protect the jobs of Indian workers and farmers, says Gupta.

Use of imported fabric or sale of bags made abroad under government procurement is banned, but curbing supplies from Bangladesh and Nepal is a big challenge, admits the jute commissioner. Bangladesh even officially supports exports by offering mills a 7.5-10% subsidy on the value of jute goods that are sold abroad.

But in his drive to end these malpractices, Mahto is quite a lone ranger.

Firstly, he is up against evolved malpractices—ones that have been tweaked over and over again to scrape through routine systemic checks. Plus, the supply chain is circuitous with many agencies—both private and state-owned—involved in the delivery of bags from mills to state-owned foodgrain procurers. And not everyone in the supply chain falls within the remit of the jute commissioner's office.

Mahto can't fix everything, so his plan appears to be to make delinquency more expensive than compliance—that's what bureaucrats typically do when

trying to clean up corruption of this magnitude. But policing alone may not be adequate deterrent.

Systemic reforms are required, and the industry is about to witness some sweeping changes, but we will come to them presently.

## The economics

To understand the motivation of the mill owners to cut corners, one must closely examine the economics of jute bag manufacturing. Annual jute goods production in India is estimated at 1.6 million tonnes (mt) by the jute commissioner's office. Of this, production of jute bags is estimated at 1.2 mt, or a whopping 75%.

The government procures about 800,000-900,000 tonnes of jute bags every year, paying a price determined every month on the basis of a so called "cost-plus" formula. It means the price paid by the government is a function of factor costs such as raw jute, labour and power, and normative efficiency in production.

Jute mill owners say for "compliant" producers, the margin from sale under government procurement is 3-4%. According to the jute commissioner's own calculations, it should be several percentage points more, but no one in the industry agrees with him.

That margin for some produc-

ers isn't adequate remuneration; however, there are others who say the volume and the short working capital cycle make up for the thin margin.

Still, there are ways to cut corners staying within the law, says a leading mill owner, asking not to be identified. "You could tweak the fabric, supply bags that are sturdy enough but slightly lighter (than 665gm) to add another 3-4 percentage points to your margin," he says. "We have done these things for ages, but to supply used bags is completely unacceptable."

Government procurement only provides for "sustainability", according to the manager of another mill, who, too, asked not to be named. For the industry, the "real profits" traditionally came from so-called private sales. "That market has crashed—selling in the open market, you cannot even recover costs these days," this person says.

The contrabands that leak out from government procurement are partly responsible for the poor prices in the private market. They are normally sold in the private market at a deep discount to the fair price.

Dharam Chand Baheti, managing director of Gloster Ltd, which has one of the most advanced production facilities, has a more theoretical take on the malaise in the jute industry.

Entrepreneurs from the Birla,

Goenka and Bangur families were forced to exit or scale down their interest in the jute industry decades ago. A huge majority of mills have since been taken over by erstwhile traders or bargain hunters looking to make a fast buck, says Baheti, adding that these people have not ploughed back profits into the plants to diversify their product range.

As a result, they remain fully dependent on the "crutch" called government procurement, whereas advanced mills such as Gloster earn substantially from exports. Gloster, for instance, receives at least one-third of its ₹330 crore annual revenue from far more profitable exports, according to Baheti. But then, there are only a handful of such mills.

So has Mahto been able to make any inroad at all?

Compliance has lately improved, claims Raghavendra Gupta, a leading mill owner and chairman of the Indian Jute Mills Association—or Ijma, a lobby group. "There are going to be delinquents at all times, but the industry has pretty much fallen in line," says Gupta, who runs the Hooghly Group of jute mills.

But still, he says, at least 30 of the 93 jute mills in India are in losses, and 15-20 more are operating on a profit margin of 3-4%, not to speak of the dozen that are closed.

That means Mahto may have tamed some for now, but the motivation and opportunity for corruption have not been eliminated.

## Road ahead

While Mahto steps up policing in more ways than the industry had anticipated, the jute commissioner is about to introduce some new standards.

Soon, jute bags procured by the government are to weigh 580gm, reduced from 665gm. The move has driven a wedge through the industry, though Ijma officially supports it.

That apart, output of jute mills could from now on be audited by electricity consumption, and not by stated figures of employment and raw jute consumption.

These will have far-reaching implications in curbing rampant and intractable malpractices. But for jute mill owners, its immediate impacts are reduction in profit volumes and in tapering of opportunity to improve margins by cutting corners.

Bags weighing 580gm have been tested to be sturdy enough to pack 50kg of foodgrains, says Gupta. Even previously, bags weighing up to 580gm were accepted for government procurement. But even one found to weigh less than that resulted in the cancellation of the entire

consignment.

That means the tolerance limit under the new regime will be much tighter, and hence less opportunity for mill owners to puff up margins by tweaking fabric quality and bag weight—inferior bags will simply burst open under weight.

Reduction in weight will pare production cost by 9-10%, and the government's procurement price will be commensurately adjusted, says Mahto. That means the government will save ₹450-500 crore (if it doesn't step up procurement by volume), whereas for mill owners' profits will plummet.

The industry had asked the jute commissioner to create incentives for mill owners as well, but the government doesn't want to share the money it is going to save, says Baheti.

That apart, the jute commissioner's office has lately started measuring production by power consumption. Jute mills typically consume 428 units (or kilowatt-hour) of electricity for every tonne of jute bags produced.

"When we started to audit output by this yardstick, we found several mills that had consumed less than 400 units for every tonne they claimed to have produced," says Gupta. One mill was found to have consumed as little as 246 units per tonne of bags produced. "Such astounding efficiency calls for some amount of explaining, doesn't it?" he asks.

Industry veterans had seen most of these initiatives coming from a distance, but some such as production audit by power consumption was entirely unanticipated.

Not surprisingly, a section of the industry is not taking kindly to these changes. Sanjay Kajaria, a former Ijma chairman and joint managing director of **Muralidhar Ratanlal Exports Ltd**, says any kind of compliance audit is welcome, but switching to new standards without conducting enough field trials isn't advisable.

He, as well as a substantial section of the industry, isn't convinced that lighter bags would be sturdy enough. He is apprehensive that the government may have to switch back to the previous standards, whereas by implementing the new ones now, mill owners will be forced to spend ₹5-10 crore each on their production lines.

"Why not instead level the playing field by creating tariff barrier on imports and bring about stability in raw jute prices by eliminating hoarding?" Kajaria asks.

While the debate over the new standards gets more nuanced, the truck at Adilabad remains detained.

Mail Today, Delhi

Monday 10th August 2015, Page: 25

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## Textile industry in deep crisis



**SOUTHERN India Mills' Association has appealed to the Centre to take immediate steps to help the**

**domestic textile industry which is facing a recession for the last 15 months. Higher rates of duties for Indian textile products in international markets, high cost of raw material, funds and transaction cost have hit the industry.**



# No end in sight to Parl logjam

**MPOST BUREAU**

**NEW DELHI:** Parliament is likely to remain paralysed during the last days of Monsoon session as Congress on Sunday showed no signs of relenting on its protests on the Lalit Modi and Vyapam issues and hit out at the BJP for its "politics of abuse".

The ruling party too sharpened its attack on the Congress saying it had played the role of "obstructionist and destructive" opposition during the session as it was "politically bankrupt".

25 Congress members of the Lok Sabha, who were suspended by Speaker Sumitra Mahajan for five days for unruly behaviour, will be back in the House today. Congress leaders, however, parried questions on whether the MPs would again be showing placards in the house, an act that had angered the presiding officer.

Union Minister Venkaiah Naidu appealed to the Congress to allow Parliament to function for the remaining four days saying government was willing to consider any meaningful suggestion to break the deadlock, but it failed to break the ice.

"Eight more important bills are there, four bills were already passed in Lok Sabha. I hope Congress understands its responsibility. Let us see what is going to happen (tomorrow). I want Monday to be Monday and I don't want Monday to be a Sunday,"

he told reporters in Chennai.

"I have told them (Congress party) that please come to the House. Let there be discussion. Even the suspension of Congress MPs could be revoked. But there was no response. Even now if there is a meaningful suggestion, the government is willing to consider the suggestion," Naidu said.

The opposition party, however, told the government that it was not amused by the "politics of abuse" resorted to by BJP leaders and Union Ministers against Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi.

"Unfortunately, BJP leadership's thought process is fast turning to the level of personal abuse as reflected from statements of Kailash Vijayvargiya, Prakash Javadekar, Smriti Irani and Santosh Gangwar.

"We, in Congress, reject in toto and want to humbly tell the Modi government that politics of abuse will never replace the politics of consensus and construction in India," Congress' chief spokesman Randeep Surjewala said here.

The opposition has been agitating for resignation of External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj and Rajasthan Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje for allegedly helping controversial former IPL Commissioner Lalit Modi and Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan over the Vyapam scam, leading to disruption of proceedings in Parliament.





# Weaves of Banaras

Designers ABU JANI and SANDEEP KHOSLA explore the rich legacy of silks, brocades, gold and silver thread work of the old city. SHRABASTI MALLIK checks out the traditional fabrics and motifs

It seems like Banaras is slowly and steadily becoming the symbol of culture and tradition. While director Neeraj Ghaywan decided to highlight the everyday lives of the common men of Banaras with *Masaan*, designers Abu Jani and Sandeep Khosla brought alive the numerous crafts, the vibrancy and the heritage of the place, its ghats and its people through their latest bridal collection titled *Varanasi*.



It was after five years that the duo had showcased in Delhi and their show opened the BMW Bridal Fashion Week 2015 at DLF Emporio. Jani and Khosla have always claimed that they derive their inspiration from India but the way they transformed the ramp to look like the bank of one of the numerous ghats of the city, with the shiny black ramp reflecting light like a river.

What made the show all the more spectacular was Sonam Kapoor, who opened the collection in a body-hugging, heavily embellished translucent gown. With the song *Will you still love me?* by Lana Del Ray in the backdrop, the actress tried to walk down the ramp rather gracefully but the heavy embellishments might have been a tad too heavy for her to carry. There were a few times when we found the diva faltering in her steps as she swayed and danced to the music.

The collections showcased the rich legacy of silks, brocades, gold and silver thread work, carpet weaving that the city is renowned for. These magnificent traditional fabrics and motifs found new expression through their couture.

"Varanasi has always left a deep impression upon us with its history, energy, spirituality, symbolism as well as its astonishing legacy of craftsmanship. We've worked with weaves indigenous to the city over the years. But there is always a moment, a time when those impressions are translated into a solid and dedicated expression. This is that moment for us. And the collection is the result. It is an ode to everything we hold dear about the city and its indestructible soul," Sandeep Khosla pointed out.

The show was categorised in five different parts in which the shade of the sacred white seamlessly transformed to vermilion red.

It began with *Vrindavan* which focussed a lot on georgette and *khadi* with intricate *resham* and *zardozi* works in the shades of pink, red, orange and yellow. The show started with the duos' signature *chikankari* pieces studded with tone on tone Swarovski crystals and moved on to heavier pieces in pale gold *khadi* silks embroidered with *gota*. Cows, palm trees, parrots, and flora fauna inspired by Krishna and his *gopis* were the predominant motifs.

The shift in colours, fabric and patterns was visible when the ensemble displayed bold, floral *ghagras* on *khadi* silks, paired with a traditional Banarasi dupatta. For this line called *The ghats of Banaras*, the designers chose the colour palette of pink, red, orange and yellow with multi color highlights. Each *ghaghra* was lavishly embroidered with *gota*, gold beads and sequins.

It was not a co incidence that Jani and Khosla decided to name the third segment *Aisha* (we are referring to the character of Aisha that Sonam played in the movie of the same name).

It was one unique collection in Banarasi net and organza that introduced horse hairs for the first time,

accented with *resham*, bugle beads, crystals and sequins. A vibrant combination of pink, red,

orange and yellow dominated the ramp as part of the following segment.

Titled *Lotus*, this collection displayed bridal couture in the traditional handloom fabrics of *khadi* and Banarasi

net using faux leather and

abla appliqué

work.

photos Sanjeev Kumar



# Seamless fusion

Designer TARUN TAHILIANI has woven a story where opulence is crafted out of comfort. The Couture and Bridal 2015 collection aptly titled, 'Our Eclectic New World,' explores the possibility of a wearable lightness of being. By RUPINDER KAUR

The planets were spinning and the galaxy looked magnificent while its stars sashayed, rather glided, down the ramp in ace designer Tarun Tahiliani's 'Our Eclectic New World' collection at the BMW India Bridal Fashion Week.

With Phil Collins' *In the Air Tonight* playing in the backdrop, set of splendid blues took over in the form of gowns, *sherwanis*, and velvet *bandhgallas* with *zardozi*-bordered *dhoti* and silk pants.

An exquisite floral gown in hues of beige, cobalt and jade with coloured Swarovski crystals and spray of flowers on the hemline paired with a corset was a splendid vision. Moving onto the phosphorescent falling stars behind, the shades of blush pink, peach and ivory were ready to enthrall.

A model in a gorgeous shaded blouse embellished with crystals and a flowy blush pink skirt with sheer silk texture, moved almost effortlessly.

"My theme is about draping, technology, lightness, sophistication and an understatement. You're just spinning through the planets because I am done with forts, palaces and temples," Tahiliani told us after the show. He started sketching for this carefully cultivated mystique collection in December last year. "A lot of the technology that goes into clothes, we work on it all the time. Designing or making clothes is an evolution with minor revolutions," he further added.

Ivory and gold tulle sari with pleats with delicate metal sequins and crystal embellished *palla* paired with a contoured sheer blouse with *resham* and pave embroidery, was the perfect blend of old and new world charm.

A Victorion-esque gold and ivory silk velvet appliqué jacket with French knots and voluminous tulle skirt would be fit for a fairy tale wedding.

"It is a visceral blend of classic draping, poetic construction, opulent textiles and intricate embellishments. There is a need for an intelligent and seamless fusion of our past and present," Tahiliani said.

The bold shades then entered with a black printed *lehenga* with burgundy border, *kalidar kurta* and a *dupatta* with *zardozi* embroidery. This was followed by *badla*-embroidered red silk *lehenga* with a silk blouse. The showstopper, model-turned-actress Lisa Haydon, dazzled in a golden silk *lehenga* with an off-shoulder *kasab* embroidered blouse.

"I feel unbelievable. This collection is very lightweight and it fits like a dream. This is the first time that I've actually worn gold and cream. I love the sun-kissed gold. Tarun has departed from his very regal Rajasthani outfits," the *Queen* actress told us.



# NO END IN SIGHT TO PARL DEADLOCK

## CONG, BJP IN BLAME-GAME, BJP QUESTIONS OPP ROLE IN HOUSE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
New Delhi, 9 August

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The ruling party too sharpened its attack on the Congress saying it had played the role of "obstructionist and destructive" opposition during the session as it was "politically bankrupt".

Twenty-five Congress members of the Lok Sabha, who were suspended by Speaker Sumitra Mahajan for five days for unruly behaviour, will be back in the House tomorrow.

Congress leaders, however, parried questions on whether the MPs would again be showing placards in the house, an act that had angered the presiding officer. Union Minister Venkaiah Naidu appealed to the Congress to allow Parliament to function for the remaining four days saying government was willing to consider any meaningful suggestion to break the deadlock, but it failed to break the ice.

"Eight more important

bills are there, four bills were already passed in Lok Sabha. I hope Congress understands its responsibility. Let us see what is going to happen (tomorrow). I want Monday to be Monday and I don't want Monday to be a Sunday," he told reporters in Chennai.

"I have told them (Congress party) that please come to the House. Let there be discussion. Even the suspension of Congress MPs could be revoked. But there was no response. Even now if there is a meaningful suggestion, the government is willing to consider the suggestion," Naidu said.

The Opposition party, however, told the government that it was not amused by the "politics of abuse" resorted to by BJP leaders and Union Ministers against Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi.

"Unfortunately, BJP leadership's thought process is fast turning to the level of personal abuse as reflected from statements of Kailash Vijayvargiya, Prakash Javadekar, Smriti Irani and Santosh Gangwar.

"We, in Congress, reject in toto and want to humbly tell the Modi government that politics of abuse will never replace the politics of consensus and construction in India," Congress

chief spokesman Randeep Surjewala said here.

The Opposition has been agitating for resignation of External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj and Rajasthan Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje for allegedly helping controversial former IPL Commissioner Lalit Modi and Madhya Pradesh chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan over the Vyapam scam, leading to disruption of proceedings in Parliament. Protesting against the suspension of MPs, Congress and other opposition parties boycotted Lok Sabha proceedings.

Targeting Rahul Gandhi who along with Congress Chief Sonia Gandhi is leading the protests, BJP said he is "miles away from ground realities" and alleged that Congress has made Parliament a "platform" to display its "narrow political mindset". Union minister of state for parliamentary affairs Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi said while politics of Parliament and road is for people's welfare, the "brand new leader" of the grand old party is "neither able to understand realities of the roads nor importance of Parliament."

The minister said that disruption in Parliament on genuine issues is an acceptable part of democracy, but it must be issue-based, log-

ical and in the interest of people of the country.

"But what we have seen from day one of the current Monsoon session of Parliament, which started on 21 July, is disruption on non-issues and without any logic. "It is against democratic principles. Proceedings in both the Houses have been disrupted by the Congress, the main Opposition party, on baseless issues while the government was always ready for debate on all the issues and to resolve them," Naqvi claimed in his blog post.

A senior Congress leader, who declined to be identified, said that there have been no efforts from the government side in the last two days to end the deadlock.

Party leaders have thrown the ball in the government's court on the issue of smooth functioning of Parliament contending that if it was interested in its running, then it will reach out to the opposition.

It said that the deadlock in Parliament would end when the Prime Minister takes action those indulging in "gross impropriety and corruption". The Monsoon session is concluding on 13 August and government has plans to bring the Land bill in the Lok Sabha this week.