

DNA, Mumbai

Tuesday 3rd February 2015, Page: 6

Width: 29.26 cms, Height: 22.11 cms, a3r, Ref: pmin.2015-02-04.18.15

Draft textile policy has China in mind

Document talks of five mega clusters, divestment of sick cooperative mills and FDI to make state units globally competitive

Kanchan Srivastava
@kanchanDNA

The Suresh Halwankar Committee formed to review the existing textile policy of Maharashtra has recommended disinvestment of sick cooperative mills and development of five mega-textile hubs, while stressing the need for FDI to take global players head on.

The draft of the new policy which was submitted to chief minister Devendra Fadnavis on January 30 talks of adopting a 'Fibre to Fashion' approach to turn around the sector, which was once blooming in the state.

The Committee has suggested setting up of mega composite hubs which will offer spinning, weaving, processing, designing and garmenting units to cut down on cost and time. The area should have common effluent treatment plants and water recycling plants to minimise damage to the environment. Its policy also seeks to reduce power tariff for the sector. The draft policy will now be sent to the cabinet for approval.

"We are losing out the market to China mainly because it takes nine months for our cotton to become a garment. There it takes just two months because of full-fledged textile hubs," said Halwankar, who has recommended establishment of mega-textile hubs spread over 1,000 hectares as against allowing garment factories to come up in a scattered manner.

"Amravati must be developed as spinning, Nagpur as knitting, Solapur teri-towel and Ichalkaranji for suiting-

shirting-denim mega composite textile hubs with complete set-up of related facilities including world-class designing and skill development centres. Three process parks at Ichalkaranji-Solapur-Malegaon is must," outlines the proposed policy which is drafted in accordance with the central government's "Vision, strategy and action plan for Indian Textile sector 2020-2025".

At present, over 30 lakh people are directly employed by the garment industry and its ancillary units provide jobs to about 2 crore people. This makes the sector second

only agriculture in terms employment generation.

Maharashtra is India's second largest cotton producer - 81 lakh bales from over 38.7 hectare. Of this, only 25 lakh bales are consumed by the spinning mills in the state. According to the Committee's report,

Maharashtra will need over 50 lakh spindles to utilise all the cotton grown in the state. To achieve this, the sector will need an investment of about Rs50,000 crore. "Since the state earns over Rs1,000 crore revenue from selling yarn worth 40,000 crore, increasing spinning capacity would help generating more revenue."

Halwankar has also proposed handing over of perennially sick cooperative cotton mills to the private sector and the government should implement a disinvestment scheme to facilitate such changes. The committee has also asked the government to project 'Maharashtra beyond Mumbai' at international stage to attract FDI in textile sector.

Recommendations of the Committee

One form, one window to grant all permissions to set up industry
Reduced power tariff for textile industry like other states

NOC from pollution board not required for spinning, weaving or knitting mills

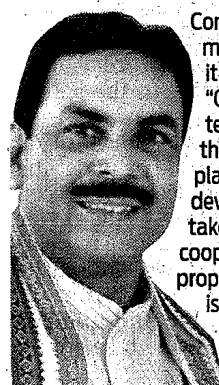
Women to be allowed to work in night shifts to improve production

0.5% cess on cotton purchase of cotton for insurance of workers

30% subsidy for upgradation in B and C zone of the state

40% in D zone

It will kill cooperative sector: Former textile minister



Congress MLA and former textile minister slammed the report, saying it would kill the cooperative sector. "Giving away sick cooperative textile mills to private sector will kill the cooperative sector which has played a major role in rural development. The government must take action against erring officials of cooperative mills. Halwankar has proposed reduced power tariff while it is the BJP government that discontinued power subsidy to power looms."



'Cong-NCP govt's policy lacked vision'

Suresh Halwankar and his team visited eight states to study the textile scenario outside Maharashtra before proposing their policy. Halwankar is himself associated with the industry and represents Ichalkaranji. In an interview to Kanchan Srivastava, the 51-year-old legislator shares his government's vision to revive the textile sector in Maharashtra. Edited excerpts:

What are the highlights of your proposed policy?

We have proposed mega composite clusters with Amravati as spinning hub, Nagpur as knitting hub, Solapur teri-towel hub and ichalkaranji/Bhiwandi for suiting-shirting-

denim hub along with design-cum-sampling centres, processing parks and skill development centres. Various subsidies for investors and inviting FDI are other major recommendations. The idea is to improve efficiency like China. There it takes two months to prepare cloth from the cotton as they have all the facilities in the clusters which also cut down the cost. Here, the process takes at least nine months.

How is it different from the one brought during the Congress-NCP regime in 2012-17?

The textile policy of the previous government lacked long-

term vision and comprehensive approach. The policy neither benefited industrialists nor the farmers and workers. Our mega-cluster approach and subsidies will give the sector get a fillip by bringing down production cost and time. The state will be able to export garments rather than cotton which will help everyone, including the government coffers. How will the policy create more jobs and attract

bigger investments than earlier?

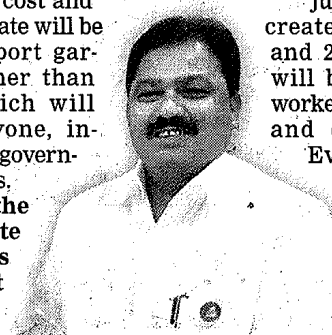
The previous policy was aimed at getting investment worth Rs 40,000 crore and creating 11 lakh jobs. However, only Rs 7,119 crore came in and just 46,084 jobs were created between 2012 and 2014. Our policy will benefit farmers, workers, industrialists and entrepreneurs. Even rural women can set up garment units with kind of subsidies we have proposed. We are

expecting an investment of Rs80,000 crore and creation of 10 lakh jobs in next five years. Revenue from textiles will jump from Rs1,000 crore to 4,000 crore a year.

People prefer real estate to textiles as it gives better returns. How will your policy attract these potential investors and FDI?

We have emphasised a lot on easing out the licensing norms and one-window approval. A special cell to coordinate with investors, fibre-to-fashion approach, 20-40% subsidies and free common effluent treatment and water recycling plants will definitely attract industrialists.

Q & A
Suresh Halwankar,
MLA Ichalkaranji



MODI ART A BIG DRAW AT SURAJKUND MELA

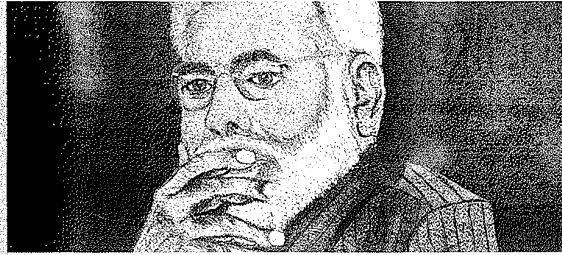
Aditya Dogra

aditya.dogra@hindustantimes.com

Crafts and culture aren't the only things wooing visitors at the Surajkund International Crafts Mela this year — it's also the Prime Minister's presence. A stall dedicated to Prime Minister Narendra Modi showcases an intricate embroidered portrait of him by Mumbai-based artist Arun K Bajaj, and Delhi-based Ajay Kumar Samir's series of special artworks inspired by Modi's poems. And no, these don't come cheap — they are priced at ₹1,25,000 - ₹2,50,000.

"Modi is the man of the hour. He is not just a leader, but he has a personality and style that draws people to him, and things themed around him. I combine my passion for sketching and stitching to create art, and I felt that Modi should be part of my artworks," says Bajaj.

Samir says he felt deeply connected to Modi's poems, and thus decided to theme his art around it. "We all know about his journey of struggle and success, but through his book (of poetry) I learned about his faith, concerns, worries, love, vision and confidence. I wanted to share the creativity of a great leader through the eyes of an artist. Through my works, I salute the poet and visionary that he is," he says.



I combine my passion for sketching and stitching to create art, and I felt Modi should be part of my works

Arun K Bajaj, artist
(embroidered work on left)

PHOTOGRAPH BY ANAND KAPOOR

NOTE TO READERS: We would like to inform our readers that some of the coverage of events that appear on our pages is paid for by the concerned brands. We would like to emphasise that no sponsored content does or shall appear in any part of HT without it being declared as such to our valued readers.

Chhattisgarh comes alive at 29th Surajkund Crafts Mela



Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Dr. Raman Singh said Chhattisgarh has carved a niche for itself with the tremendous progress it has achieved in the last 15 years.

He said divine culture is an in-

nate characteristic of Chhattisgarh and events like the 29th Surajkund International Crafts Mela provide a "great opportunity to Chhattisgarh to showcase its vast culture and tradition on a global scale".



A Rajasthani artiste entertains tourists in Bikaner on Tuesday.

— PTI

काँयर उद्योग को मिल सकती है टफ स्कीम की सुविधा

अलपुझा (केरल) (ब्यूरो)। काँयर और काँयर उत्पादों के निर्यात को बढ़ाने के लिए केंद्र सरकार काँयर उद्योग को टेक्नोलॉजी अपग्रेडेशन फंड (टफ) जैसी स्कीम की सुविधा दे सकती है। एमएसएमई मंत्रालय ने काँयर उत्पाद के निर्यात को बढ़ाने के लिए काँयर के आयात पर शुल्क बढ़ाने की भी मांग कर रहा है। मंत्रालय ने काँयर उद्योग के लिए केंद्र सरकार की तरफ से मिलने वाले बजट को भी दोगुना करने की मांग की है। केरल के राजस्व व काँयर मंत्री अडूर प्रकाश ने बताया कि चालू वित्त वर्ष 2014-15 के दौरान काँयर (नारियल जूट) व काँयर उत्पाद का निर्यात 1,500 करोड़ रुपये के स्तर को पार कर सकता है।

सूरजकुंड अंतरराष्ट्रीय शिल्प मेले में 33 हजार लोगों ने की शिरकत

फरीदाबाद (एसएनबी)। एक फरवरी से आयोजित किए जा रहे 29वें सूरजकुंड अंतरराष्ट्रीय शिल्प मेले में अब तक कुल 33 हजार लोगों ने शिरकत की।

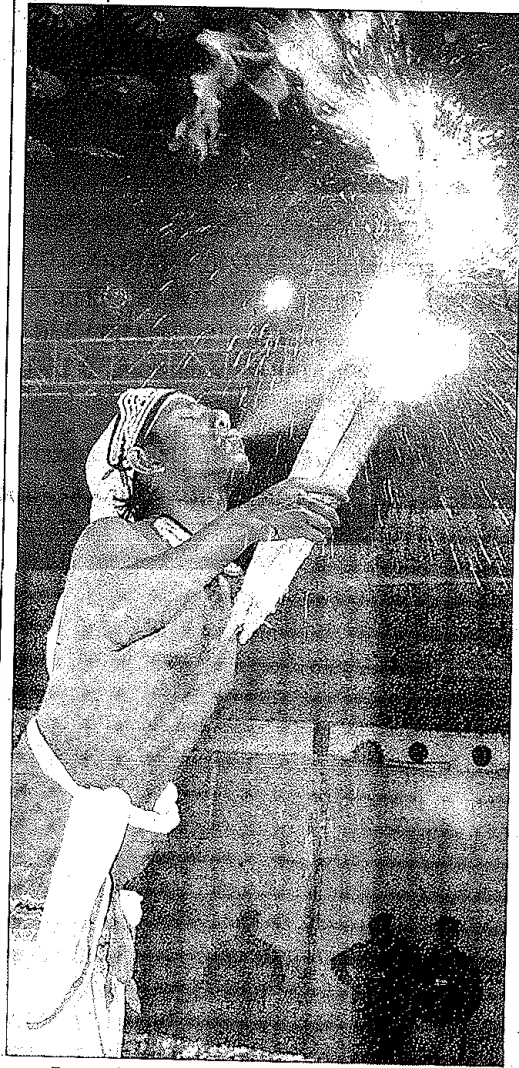
माना जा रहा है कि मेले में इतने लोगों का आना काफी सकारात्मक है। आने वाले दिनों में मेला काफी अच्छा होगा और पिछले मेलों के मुकाबले इस बार आने वाले लोगों की संख्या में बढ़ोतरी होगी। मेले में मंगलवार को चौपाल पर विभिन्न देशों और प्रदेशों के कलाकारों ने अपने रंगारंग सांस्कृतिक कार्यक्रम प्रस्तुत किए और लोगों ने इसका पूरा लुत्फ उठाया। मंगलवार को गुजरात का डांडिया, मध्य प्रदेश का बधाई, छत्तीसगढ़ का पंथी और देवरा करमा, जम्मू कश्मीर का कुड़ नृत्य प्रस्तुत किया गया। विदेशी कलाकारों ने भी उजबेकिस्तान का दूवाहा, बेलारूस का पामा और श्रीलंका का रवानी और तेलम नृत्य प्रस्तुति देकर लोगों को मंत्रमुग्ध कर दिया।



फरीदाबाद : 29वें सूरजकुंड अंतरराष्ट्रीय हस्तशिल्प मेले में मंगलवार को अपनी प्रस्तुति देते लोक कलाकार (बाएं)। रूस के कलाकारों ने भी लोक नृत्य प्रस्तुत कर लोगों को किया मंत्रमुग्ध। फोटो : एसएनबी।

शिल्पकारों को परेशान कर रही असुरक्षा

जागरण संवाददाता, फरीदाबाद : सूरजकुंड अंतरराष्ट्रीय हस्तशिल्प मेला शुरू हुए तीन दिन हो गए हैं। मगर अभी भी मेला परिसर में अधिकांश स्टाल खाली पड़ी हैं। मेला परिसर में कई क्षेत्र तो ऐसे हैं, जहां सुरक्षा को लेकर चिंतित शिल्पकारों ने अपना सामान लगाया ही नहीं है। ये शिल्पकार अपना स्टाल बदलवाने के लिए पिछले तीन दिन से अधिकारियों के चक्कर काट रहे हैं, मगर इनकी कहीं कोई सुनवाई नहीं हो रही है। सूरजकुंड मेला परिसर के छत्तीसगढ़ द्वार के साथ से नीचे उतर रहे रास्ते पर आगे जाकर स्टाल नंबर 309 से लेकर 327 तक लगभग सारी खाली हैं। एक या दो शिल्पकार यहां सामान लगाए बैठे हैं, मगर काफी अंदर की तरफ होने के कारण यहां दर्शक पहुंच नहीं रहे हैं। जिन शिल्पकारों को यहां स्टाल अलाट किए गए हैं, उनमें से अन्य महिला शिल्पकारों ने बताया कि उन्हें यहां जो स्टाल अलाट किए गए हैं, उस क्षेत्र में सुरक्षा के कोई पुरख्ता इंतजाम नहीं है।



हस्तशिल्प मेले में श्रीलंका के कलाकार हैरतअंगेज प्रदर्शन करते हुए।

हसीन रही मेले की शाम

जागरण संवाददाता, फरीदाबाद : शुभारंभ किया। मंच संचालक जैनेंद्र सिंह ने हर कार्यक्रम की प्रस्तुति के आकर्षण को बनाए रखा। संगीत और संस्कृति के मिश्रण से कलाकारों ने कला का खूबसूरत प्रदर्शन किया। रशिया का खूबसूरत डांस लाजवाब रहा। हरे तथा सफेद लिबास में बालाओं ने खासा रंग जमाया। बेलारूस के कलाकारों की प्रस्तुति ने दर्शकों को झूमा दिया। चौपाल के आसपास के खूबसूरत माहौल, रंग-बिरंगी रोशनी ने भी कार्यक्रम का आकर्षण बनाए रखा।



मेले में सांस्कृतिक संध्या के दौरान किर्गिस्तान के कलाकार मनमोहक प्रस्तुति देते हुए।

जागरण

खुशनुमा मौसम ने बढ़ाई मेले की रंगत

दर्शकों ने चौपाल पर मस्ती भरे कार्यक्रमों का लिया लुत्फ

जागरण संवाददाता, फरीदाबाद : सूरजकुंड मेले में मंगलवार को खासी रौनक रही। दोपहर बाद मौसम खुशनुमा हो जाने से मेले की रंगत बढ़ गई। लोगों ने चौपाल पर आयोजित सांस्कृतिक कार्यक्रमों का मजा लिया तो खरीदारी भी की।

रविदास जयंती की छुट्टी के चलते मेले में दर्शकों की भीड़ भी अधिक थी। मराठी लोक नृत्य की मोहक प्रस्तुति के दौरान कलाकारों ने दर्शकों के दिलों का छुआ। सूरजकुंड हस्तशिल्प मेले में बड़ी चौपाल पर ब्रज के कलाकारों ने उम्दा गीतों पर नृत्य प्रस्तुति से सांस्कृतिक परिवेश का अहसास कराया। बेलारूस के कलाकारों ने अदा बिखेरते हुए आकर्षक प्रस्तुति दी। ब्रज के कलाकारों ने मयूर नृत्य की प्रस्तुति इतनी शानदार थी कि दर्शक दीर्घा में दर्शक तालियां की गड़गड़ाहट के साथ झूमते दिखाई दिए। कलाकारों की प्रस्तुति से चौपाल पर भक्ति की धारा वहीं तो फागुन गीतों से होली की मस्ती की भी धूम रही।

मेले में चौपाल पर विभिन्न देशों और प्रदेशों के कलाकारों ने अपने रंगारंग सांस्कृतिक कार्यक्रम से दर्शकों को मंत्रमुग्ध किया। बेलारूस, पार्टनर राष्ट्र लेबनान, थीम स्टेट छत्तीसगढ़ पंजाब, हरियाणा तथा अन्य कई देशों व प्रदेशों के कलाकारों ने अपनी रंगारंग प्रस्तुति देकर समां बांध दिया। मेले में



चौपाल पर अदा बिखेरते बेलारूस के कलाकार।

जागरण

युवाओं की टोलियों ने खूब मस्ती की। हरियाणा के अपना घर में आकर फोटो खिंचवाए तो छत्तीसगढ़ के परंपरागत लिबास में बनाई गई कृति के साथ भी युवक, युवतियों ने फोटो खिंचवाए।

पेंटिंग में डीएवी को प्रथम पुरस्कार

सूरजकुंड मेले में सोमवार को जूनियर्स के लिए फेस पेंटिंग प्रतियोगिता का आयोजन किया गया। प्रतियोगिता में विभिन्न स्कूलों के बच्चों ने बड़े जोश और उत्साह के साथ भाग



मेले में एक स्टाल पर बैग की खरीदारी करती विदेशी बालाएं।

मेले में सेल्फी लेती युवतियां।

लिया। प्रतियोगिता में प्रथम पुरस्कार फरीदाबाद के डीएवी पब्लिक स्कूल के यशदीप और देवियन को दिया गया। द्वितीय पुरस्कार फरीदाबाद के सेक्टर 29 के होली चाइल्ड पब्लिक स्कूल की आयुषि और प्राची

को दिया गया।

तृतीय पुरस्कार फरीदाबाद के गीता बाल निकेतन स्कूल की छात्रा कविता और वैभव को दिया गया। प्रतियोगिता में सांत्वना पुरस्कार फरीदाबाद के गीता बाल निकेतन

स्कूल के नकुल और आकृति तथा फरीदाबाद के राजकीय बाल वरिष्ठ माध्यमिक विद्यालय के उमेश व सूरज को दिया गया। यह सभी पुरस्कार हरियाणा पर्यटन विभाग की ओर से दिए गए।

भारतीय लोक संस्कृति के प्रति विदेशियों का बढ़ता आकर्षण...



हरियाणा के सूरजकुंड में चल रहे अंतरराष्ट्रीय शिल्प मेले में लोक कलाकारों के साथ फोटो खिंचवाते विदेशी पर्यटक।



उधर, मंगलवार को 'महाराजा एक्सप्रेस ट्रेन' से बीकानेर पहुंचे विदेशी पर्यटक राजस्थानी कलाकार की इतनी बड़ी मूंछों को देखते हुए।

सूरजकुंड में भिलाई के अंकुश व अशोक ने बढ़ाया राज्य का मान

नई दिल्ली (ब्यूरो)। सूरजकुंड में आयोजित अंतरराष्ट्रीय शिल्प मेले में भिलाई के दो कलाकार भाइयों अंकुश एवं अशोक देवांगन चर्चा के विषय बने हुए हैं। इन भाइयों ने समूचे मेला परिसर में राज्य की ग्रामीण संस्कृति को उकेरा है, जिसे सिर्फ हिंदुस्तान ही नहीं, देश-विदेश के लोग काफी पसंद कर रहे हैं। इन मूर्तिकारों में बड़ा अंकुश देवांगन बीएसपी में कार्यरत है, वहीं छोटा भाई अशोक भारतीय रेल में कर्मचारी है। गौरतलब है कि दिल्ली स्थित राजहरा नगरी में उनके द्वारा बनाई गई छह मंजिली इमारत जितने भव्य कृष्ण-अर्जुन लौहरथ को इस वर्ष लिम्का बुक ऑफ द वर्ल्ड रिकॉर्ड में शामिल किया है। दुनिया की सबसे छोटी मूर्तियां तथा चावल के दानों पर पेंटिंग के लिए उन्हें पहले ही लिम्का रिकॉर्ड का अवॉर्ड प्राप्त हुआ है। भिलाई के देवांगन भाइयों ने



कलाकृति के साथ अंकुश व अशोक।

सूरजकुंड मेले में छत्तीसगढ़ की धाक जमा दी है। इन भाइयों द्वारा पिछले ढाई महीनों से लगभग 70 लोगों की टीम लेकर मेला स्थल पर जो भी निर्माण किया गया, वह देखते ही बनता है। उन्होंने दिल्ली के इंडिया गेट की तर्ज पर मेले में छत्तीसगढ़ गेट बनाया है, जिसकी सभी प्रशंसा कर रहे हैं।

Cotton cultivation might drop 15% if prices remain low



In 2014-15, cotton area under cultivation was around 13 million hectares in India for 2014-15, about 1.5 million hectares higher than the previous year's

PHOTO: BLOOMBERG

VINAY UMARJI & VIMUKT DAVE
Ahmedabad/Rajkot, 3 February

After witnessing a year of record production, cultivation of cotton in 2015-16 is projected to fall 20 per cent in India. According to cotton traders and mill owners, on the one hand, while global demand for cotton and cotton yarn dropped in recent months, cotton prices also fell owing to lack of good quality cotton in the market.

Arun Dalal, a leading cotton trader and exporter, estimated that low prices and lower demand may discourage farmers leading to reduced cotton cultivation in 2015-16 by 15-20 per cent.

"Prices fell due to several reasons, including oversupply and reduced demand. Add to that, prices also fell due to non-availability of good quality cotton. This has discouraged farmers heavily. If the situation remains more or less the same till April, cotton cultivation for 2015-16 in India could fall by 15-20 per cent," said Dalal. In 2014-15, cotton area was in around 13 million hectares in India for 2014-15, about 1.5 million hectares higher than previous year.

Global factors like decline in cotton yarn exports and overall global demand for cotton being low, cotton prices took a hit globally. From an average 90 cents per pound, cotton prices globally ranged between 50 cents and 60

cents per pound in some cases.

"China also stopped importing cotton that impacted global cotton markets. Also, demand from mills also came down drastically due to reduced exports. All these factors led to fall in cotton prices. If prices do not improve much or global as well as domestic markets do not improve, then there could be fall in cotton cultivation by at least 10 per cent," said K Selvaraju of South Indian Mills Association.

This year, cotton yarn exports too have come down, from 140 million kg last year to about 100 million kg this year.

Globally also, cotton cultivation is projected to be down by six per cent in 2015-16. "Low cotton prices are expected to persist through the rest of 2014-15 when farmers in the northern hemisphere make their planting decisions. As a result, world cotton area in 2015-16 is projected down six per cent to 31.6 million hectares. Assuming a world average yield of 777 kg/ha, world cotton production is forecast to fall six per cent to 24.6 million tonnes, which is the lowest volume since 2009-10," said the International Cotton Advisory Committee (ICAC).

At the same time, ICAC expects world cotton consumption to increase by two per cent to 24.7 million tonnes.

CCI exceeds procurement target, to get 75 lakh bales

Nanda Kasabe

Pune, Feb 3: Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) has already crossed its targeted procurement of 60 lakh bales and hopes to obtain more than 75 lakh bales of cotton this year.

Alongside cotton procurement, CCI has already begun sale of cotton and has procured around 15,000 bales in a week so far, BK Mishra, MD, CCI, told *FE*.

The sale has been receiving a good response since our prices are above the market rates and therefore the cotton is being sold through both the e-auction and conventional means, he said.

Initially, CCI has been targeting a sale of 5,000 bales a day and hopes that it will pick up as the arrivals also increase. At present, prevailing market rates are around Rs 31,500 per candy. Arrivals are expected to peak in the middle of February. Arrivals are increasing from Maharashtra, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh since the last week.

In response to a query regarding farmers in Tamil Nadu wanting CCI to step in to procure cotton, Mishra said that he has been in touch with the secretary of Tamil Nadu and felt that there is no need to intervene.

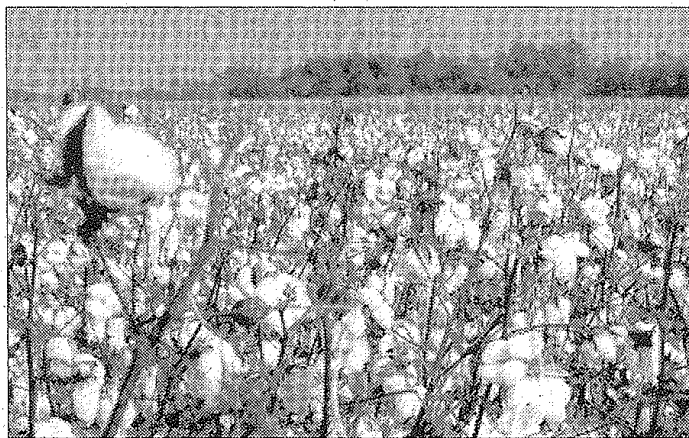
The corporation has been

targeting a procurement of 60 lakh bales worth Rs 12,000 crore this year as prices in a majority of the cotton growing states in the country have fallen below the MSP announced by the government.

The procurement of the targeted 60 lakh bales so far is the highest since the year 2008-09 when CCI procured around 90 lakh bales of cotton. This time it could exceed 75 lakh bales. CCI is now present in around 340 centres, and is actively purchasing

cotton from October 2014 to protect farmers from sharp decline in domestic prices in view of expected higher production. Cotton prices in domestic market are ruling below support price of Rs 4,050 per quintal for last few months.

In global markets, cotton prices have fallen substantially since last spring (March-May), when they were above 90 cents per pound to under 70 cents per pound in December. The In-



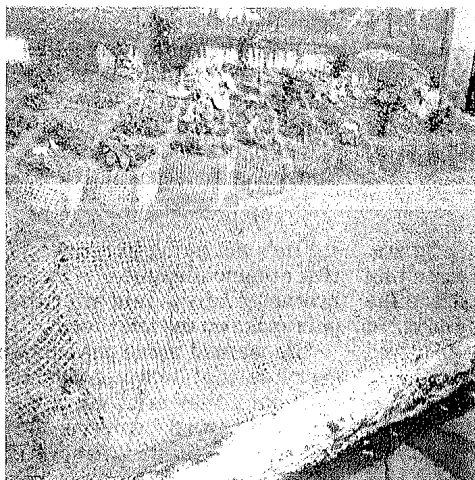
cotton in about 150 centres. In southern states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, the CCI bought about 70-80% of arrivals, while it procured about 10-15% of arrivals in western states of Gujarat and Maharashtra. In view of the large quantity of cotton already procured, CCI has already begun selling cotton from its stocks.

CCI had begun procurement operation at the sup-

port price from October 2014 to protect farmers from sharp decline in domestic prices in view of expected higher production. Cotton prices in domestic market are ruling below support price of Rs 4,050 per quintal for last few months. In global markets, cotton prices have fallen substantially since last spring (March-May), when they were above 90 cents per pound to under 70 cents per pound in December. The International Cotton Advisory Committee (ICAC) in its recent report said that India's production is expected to remain stable at 6.8 million tonne due to less favourable monsoons and despite an expansion in the cotton acreage by 5% to 12.3 million hectares. However, its production will surpass China's by over 300,000 tons, making it the largest cotton producer in 2014-15.

FROM GOD'S OWN COUNTRY | Experts say that the material has potential beyond products that emerge from traditional cottage industries

Coir exhibition aims to boost production of fibre



Displays made of the fibre at the five-day coir festival at Alleppey, Kerala

dna correspondent @dna

Alleppey: With exports touching 5,37,040 metric tonnes last year, Kerala leads the global supply chain for coir and coir products. So it isn't surprising then that the government is doing all it can to promote the use of this versatile fibre from the cocos nucifera tree. The state and the central governments have expensed crores for the fifth edition of Coir Kerala, a five-day event at the EMS stadium to promote its export and boost local demand.

Coir, which is predominantly used for matting, mattresses, organic farming and logistics (rope and packaging material), is a material that has potential beyond

Unlocking potential

Acoustic panels: The Institute of Indian Interior Designers partnered with NCRMI to develop coir panels that can be used on walls and ceiling to create unmatched indoor acoustic systems. Designer Collins Samuel says that coir has inherent characteristics that allow it to absorb sound and that these characteristics have been amplified in the Accoir panels. These panels, he says, absorb more than 60% of the sound, resulting in little or no echo.

Coir dust as cosmetic compact powder: Ama Agyewaa Agyei of Coco Dourado says that the fine powder that is a residual byproduct in the production of coir is as soft as the fine compact powder that is used in cosmetics. Thus, this fine powder can perhaps be used as a cosmetic

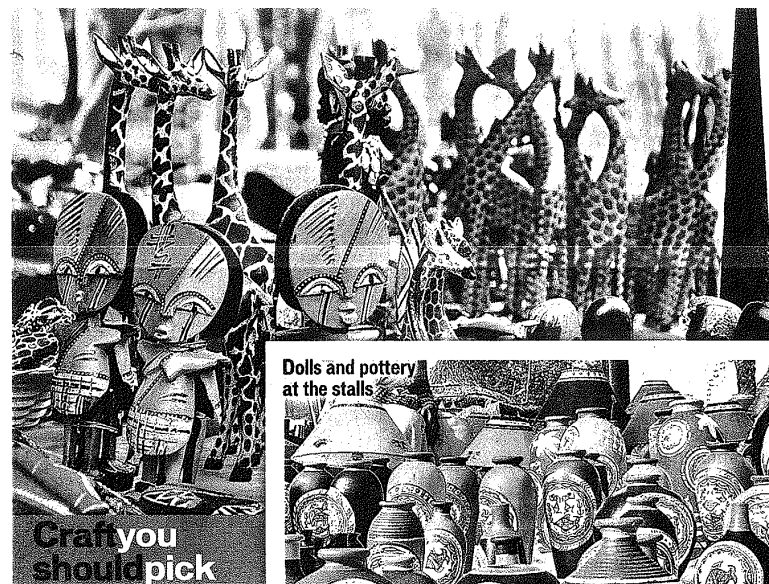
the products that emerge from traditional cottage industries. So much so that a young entrepreneur from Ghana, Ama Agyewaa Agyei, is exploring the use of coir dust to clean oil spills from oceans. "We are doing research to see if we can use coir dust to ab-

sorb oil, forming cakes, which can then be mechanically removed from the spill area," said Agyei. "Coir is sustainable. It's not that we want coir; we need coir."

Material engineer, Professor Carlo Santulli of the Universita di Camerino, Italy, cited the ex-

ample of hemp fibre being used to make warm blankets. "This is no longer the case. We've not only lost the people who made the hemp textiles, but we can no longer find the looms that were in use. We've lost the expertise." The professor stressed that coir must be combined with other plant fibres that are more durable and cost-effective and are therefore preferred over coir.

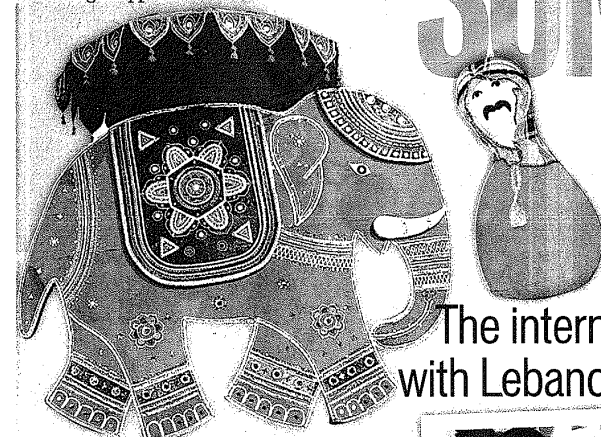
Stall after stall at the international exhibition, primarily had three products to showcase – coir mats, coir peeth and mattress sheets – drilling the point home that huge investments will have to be made in coir research and development to take the industry forward.



Dolls and pottery at the stalls

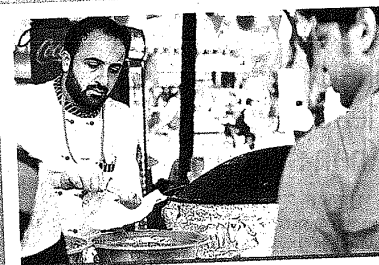
Craft you should pick

From tribal statues of Bastar to the Cedar art of Lebanon, the festival is showcasing some of the best work from around the country and the world. Visitors can shop for artefacts and souvenirs starting from a nominal price of ₹10 to prices that go into lakhs. The cushion dolls at the Lebanon stall and jewellery and craft from the Uzbekistan are popular among shoppers.



Your fill of falafel

There is something for everyone at the food stalls, be it the spicy kachori from Rajasthan, juicy falafel at the Lebanese stall, tangy Bombay bhupuri or the sweet delights at the Chattisgarh stall. This is one area of the festival which is always crowded and no matter where you're shopping, the aroma draws you to it. With tastes so good, you might just over eat.



YOUR GUIDE TO SURAJKUND HOPPING

The international crafts mela is in love with Lebanon and all its beauty this year



Performers dance to folk songs at the festival

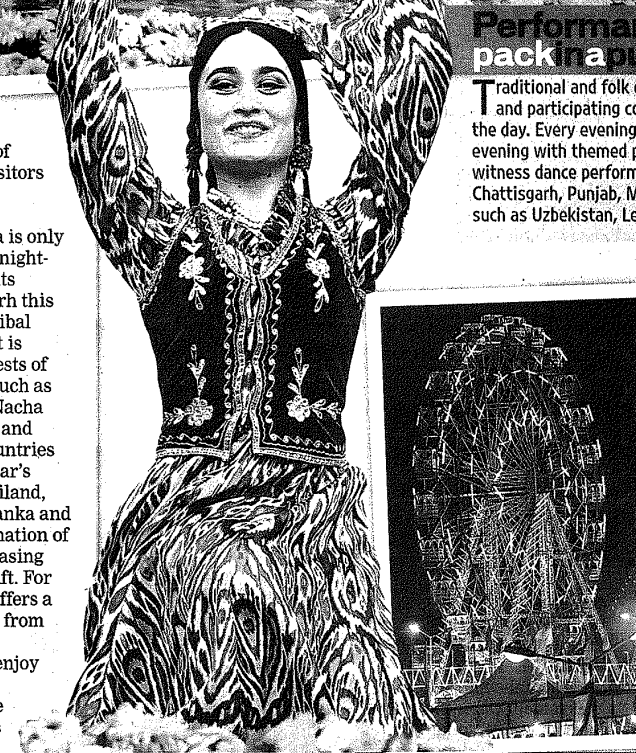
Performances pack a punch

Traditional and folk dances by various states and participating countries go on throughout the day. Every evening, the venue hosts a special evening with themed performances. One can witness dance performances from the states of Chattisgarh, Punjab, Maharashtra and countries such as Uzbekistan, Lebanon and Azerbaijan.

Seeing a footfall of almost 12,000 visitors on the first day, the Surajkund International crafts mela is only getting grander. The fortnight-long festival, which has its theme state as Chattisgarh this year, is showcasing its tribal heritage and culture that is still preserved in the forests of Bastar, and folk dances such as Panthi, Chaitra, Rawat Nacha Pandwani, Kaksar, Saila and Soowa. Among the 18 countries which are part of this year's festival are Uganda, Thailand, Syria, Uzbekistan, Sri Lanka and Vietnam, is the partner nation of Lebanon which is showcasing art, cuisine and local craft. For the foodies, the festival offers a number of local delights from different states and countries. One can also enjoy various cultural performances during the day and special evenings planned for each day.

"Showcasing our culture and heritage at Surajkund is a huge push for cultural exchange. India itself has so much to offer and we are getting a great response," says Zaher Redwan, who is leading the Lebanese delegation. "The crowd cheers the loudest when our performers come on stage and it's a great feeling," he adds. Here's a list of all the dos at the mela.

ADITYA DOGRA



Rides that thrill

For those who love adventure, this year, the festival offers a dedicated amusement area with camel rides, ferris wheels, joyrides and other entertainment options. The venue looks its best at night, when the colourful lights and music come on. Popular among the crowd this year is the giant ferris wheel, which gives a panoramic view of the mela, and the helicopter rides we earlier told you about. The helicopter tour, priced at ₹2000, offers a view like no other.



CATCH IT LIVE

WHAT: Surajkund International Crafts Mela
WHERE: Surajkund, Faridabad, Haryana
ON TILL: February 15
TIMINGS: 9:30am to 8:30pm
ENTRY: ₹70

NEAREST METRO STATION: Badarpur on Violet Line

