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Two Indians in Paris

Manish Arora and Rahul Mishra kept the Indian fashion flag flying high at the recently concluded Paris Fashion Week

KIMI DANGOR

WINTER came to Paris Fashion Week (PFW) in true *Game of Thrones*-style. Designer Manish Arora launched a frontal attack on Day Three of the Fall-Winter 2015 edition with violent colour, graphic prints and gilded armoury. With owls, ravens and dragons perched on shoulders and plastered on to clothes, skull-shaped minaudieres, helmets, capes, chains and feathers, and even a pageant-ish sash proclaiming "Winter Is Coming" — the references drawn from George RR Martin's tale were blatant and the translation far from subtle. But, as fans of the maverick designer will tell you, more is always

magical in Arora-land.

In contrast, Rahul Mishra's "The Village", showcased on the final day, was a study in subtlety, with embroideries, shades and shapes that whispered, quiet enough for you to hear bird-song, quite literally. Mishra had birds, sheep, flowers and village home rooftops embroidered onto his creations, like a "graphical sketchbook" reminiscing about the hamlet that he was born in. It also spoke of the journey of the wool extracted in Gurrundah, a village near Sydney, Australia, finding shape and form in a village called Baundpur near Kolkata. Pristine ivory met blush tones, nudes, inky blues and midnight hues in soft wool, silks and delicate sheers fortified by zipper detailing.

While they may have their Indian origins and

Delhi basecamps in common, Arora, a PFW veteran of eight years, and Mishra in his second season, presented shows that were polar opposites in sentiment and sensibility — one verging on costumery, the other reflecting on craft.

But both couldn't have been more far removed from the cliches that have come to be associated with Indian fashion internationally. Sure, Arora's line played on kitsch and colour and Mishra's brought his rural roots into the reckoning, but when it came to presenting collections that were universal in essence and global in their appeal, both were largely successful.

They stuck to their core strengths, yet drew the conversation away from the limited subcontinental context of just "vivid colours and sari prints", as described by Suzy Menkes, Editor of *International Vogue*, in relation to Mishra's showcase. We're banking on the king of kitsch and the rising star to keep the Indian fashion flag aloft in the international arena for many years to come.

(Left) Manish Arora's spectacle was inspired by *Game of Thrones*; Rahul Mishra's 'The Village' tells stories of people, process, and craft

Apparel industry bats for duty-free access

Wants govt to prise open EU, US markets using FTAs

Umesh M Avvannavar

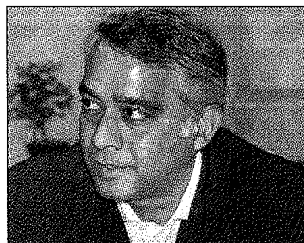
BENGALURU, DHNS: Given very stiff competition from its South Asian neighbours, India needs to focus on getting duty-free access to EU, and subsequently to the US, as they are two of the biggest export markets, garment makers feel.

Talking to *Deccan Herald* on the sidelines of the Fabric and Accessories (F&A) trade show, Nike Country Director (India, Sri Lanka and Pakistan) Atul Ujagar said, "Indian apparel exports are roughly around \$17 billion which is less than

the textile, yarn, and cotton exports which amounts to around \$20 billion. Together, textile and garment exports are at around \$37 billion."

Other countries are actively working on "free trade agreements which would help their apparel be allowed 'duty-free' into developed countries.

The textile and apparel industry is strong, and given ample support, it would emerge as one of the fastest growing. The government should be much more aggressive on securing duty-free status to open up the EU and US mar-

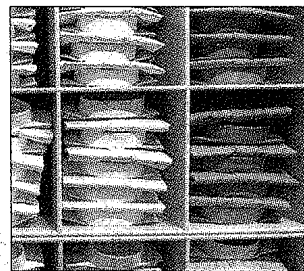


Atul Ujagar

kets," he said.

He said the industry employs 45 million people which makes it one of the top three employers. "We are not able to realise the full supply chain value which we should strive for," Ujagar said.

He said India has a very competitive labour rate compared with other South-east Asian countries — in fact one



of India's core strengths is its cost-competitive labour. Where we lag behind is in productivity and efficiencies in manufacturing. There needs to be a dedicated focus to improve India's productivity, he said.

He said even neighbours Bangladesh and Sri Lanka fare better as they have a better and productive labour pool.

He feels Sri Lanka has the edge in infrastructure in terms of manufacturing set-up, power, roads, ports, besides overall efficiencies. Bangladesh too enjoys similar advantages in labour and infrastructure, he said. According to him, India has just a 2-3 per cent share of the \$700 billion global apparel and textile trade.

Arvind Lifestyle Senior Vice-President Anindya Ray said, "In China, the government actually provides a platform for buyers through huge exhibitions. It is an ongoing process throughout the year. After agriculture, our industry is the second largest employer. We employ right from unskilled labour to skilled labour. It is unfortunate that the gov-

ernment is not trying its best to help our industry."

"Without government support, this industry will become a dying industry. We have been placed with our backs against the wall. We export around \$17 billion, whereas tiny Bangladesh exports around \$24 billion. Just to give perspective, China's exports are around \$65 billion," Ray said.

"Despite the fact that everyone is talking about China, that country is becoming expensive and people want to move out. The fact is that this industry has grown in China, and is still growing. But even if there is a one or two per cent shift away from China, we are not in a position to make use of it owing to the lack of infrastructure."

Why a sari is both hot, and cool

Indian garments like the sari, dhoti and lungi adapt beautifully to varied weather conditions, shows research

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Only a Bollywood heroine can cavort around the Alps in a chiffon sari without losing her extremities to frostbite. But the idea may not be as ridiculous as it seems. The sari, says fresh research, can alternately cool and warm a body simply in the way it is draped.

Dr Madhavi Indraganti, a Hyderabad-bred architect and scholar who teaches at the Prince Sultan University in Riyadh, has established that the sari is all-weather wear in a paper published in a peer-reviewed journal Architectural Science Review.

The nub of it is: you can go from summer to winter in the same sari, and you'll have all-round comfort just by making small changes with the pallu and a few add-on accessories. And it is not just the sari that is weather-versatile Indian wear. The four-yard dhoti, the two-yard lungi and the pancha (dhoti tied through the legs) are all capable of shielding the body from extreme heat and cold to varying degrees, says Indraganti.

"When comparing Indian thermal comfort data from

the field, I wanted to know the exact value of the clothing insulation of the sari (standard insulation values have been derived for almost every article of clothing and common clothing ensembles in the world), but there were no published standards for the sari," says Indraganti.

Computing the insulation value of indigenous clothing (measured in units called 'clo') can help researchers prescribe more accurate thermal comfort models for India. The insulation value of the sari has been determined earlier but only Indraganti had studied it in its various drapes.

In 2013, on a Fulbright-Nehru Fellowship, Indraganti collaborated with other scholars to conduct a year-long study on the sari. She tested two saris, a lightweight yellow silk Kalakshetra sari from Tamil Nadu, and a heavier green polyester sari from Gadag, Karnataka. These she draped around a female thermal manikin called Monica, in the common Nivi style, with the length wound around the body

from right to left, pleated in the front at the waist, the pallu swept back over a shoulder.

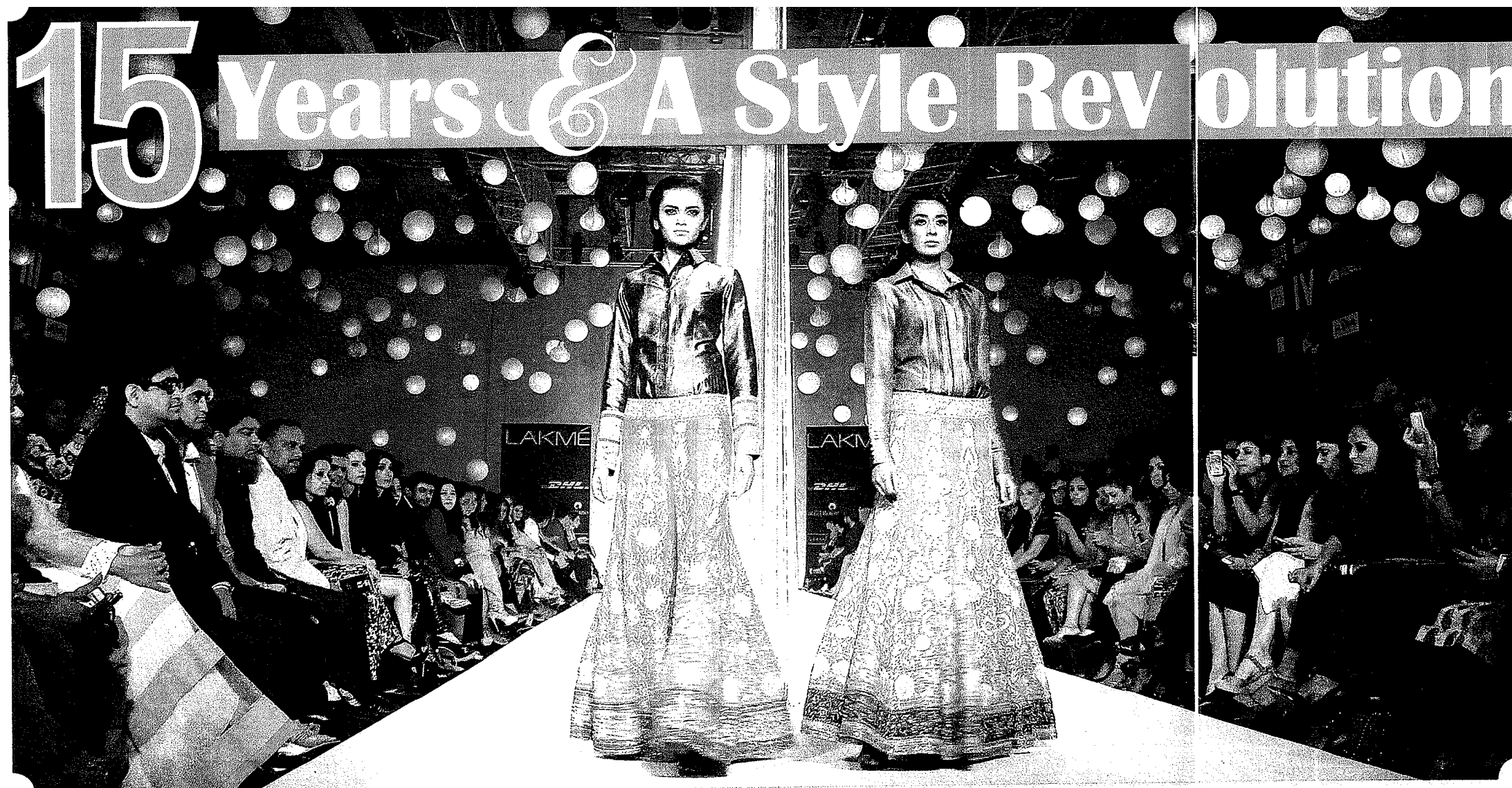
The \$200,000 thermal manikin contained a heat engine which could simulate the temperature of the human body and its thermal responses to stimuli like humidity, room temperature, ventilation, and clothing insulation. Maintaining the chamber temperature at 20 degrees, and Monica's skin temperature at 34 degrees, the team outfitted her in nine ensembles complete with undergarments, a sari under-skirt and bodice. The ensembles corresponded with the way saris are usually draped in summer, monsoon and winter.

The results showed that the sari can handle a wide range of weather conditions. The clothing insulation values were increased by as much as 47% just by changing the drape on the upper body alone. Winter drapes provided almost as much insulation as coveralls, long-sleeved thermal underwear and long underwear bottoms. The summer and monsoon ensembles similarly came close to the Western pairing of turtleneck blouse, skirt, socks and formal shoes.

"You can reduce the clothing insulation of a sari to the value of a pair of knickers and take it up to that of a three-piece suit," remarks Indraganti.

In field studies, she'd seen domestic workers lift the sari hem up some inches to the calves by tucking the pleats into the waistband. This created more legroom and improved air circulation up the legs. Indraganti points out that women can wear a sweater over the blouse when it's cold, the way she did in Japan at 5 degrees Celsius, or drape the pallu over their heads the way they do in Jaipur and Rajasthan to protect against a severe sun.





India's fashion weeks have grown up, branched out, created new designers, new styles, new buyers and a new aesthetic. And the show's only just begun

by Aastha Atray Banan

FASHION CHOREOGRAPHER Lubna Adams still remembers India's very first fashion week (Lakmé, in association with the Fashion Design Council of India), which was held in Delhi in 2000. She had flown down from New York to take part. "All the designers sat around a table deciding what sets will be put up, how the models will walk, everything," she recalls. "All energies were devoted to making sure the first fashion week was brilliant. Ranna Gill was the first show, and it was a massive three-designer finale – with Tarun Tahiliani, Wendell Rodricks and Raghavendra Rathore." Sumant

Jayakrishnan, the set designer, recalls dozing off in yet another meeting about what the finale would look like. He'd designed 23 different sets for it but something sparked when he heard Tahiliani say "kaleidoscope". "That's what I took off with," Jayakrishnan says. "The stage was a giant 3D kaleidoscope with wings that moved side to side, and a roof that could move up and down. It was all about making a statement."

But in 2008 the single fashion week in Delhi split into two: Mumbai's Lakmé Fashion Week and Delhi's Wills India Fashion Week. Today India has 12 fashion weeks

(and counting), held in cities as far away as Kochi, Guwahati and Dehradun.

The coming week marks 15 years of fashion weeks in India. As the Mumbai version kicks off on March 18, you'll see how much has changed, even as the excitement (and yes, the statement-making) has remained the same. Fashion is now a legitimate business – designers are no longer glorified tailors. Indian talent is playing up the country's design heritage to give modern India something they can wear proudly anywhere in the world. Fashionable people know which designer to buy, or

copy from, for a vintage, nerdy vibe (Sabyasachi Mukherjee), for a kitschy sari (Masaba Gupta), or for an anti-fit silhouette (Kallol Datta). They also look to designers not just for their trousseau, but for on-trend everyday wear rooted in Indian sensibilities. Somewhere along the way, as fashion turned a corner, it stopped playing safe, it also started turning a profit.

REVOLUTION TO EVOLUTION

Wendell Rodricks, the legendary designer known for his flowing white creations, says there have been two big developments in the

FASHION STANDS TALL

Models strike a pose at Manish Malhotra's 2013 winter festive show

last 15 years of fashion. Senior designers have found the discipline to show twice a year (not as and when they please), and new talent has been nurtured. "If it was not for the fashion weeks, we would not have seen the likes of Sab-yasachi, Rahul Mishra, Masaba, Rimzim Dadu, Kallol Datta, Pero and many others," he says.

Saket Dhankar, vice-president of fashion at IMG-Reliance, points out that the Indian customer's increased purchasing power has made all the difference. "How we consume fashion has changed – it's not just for a wedding, but for everyday wear." In the process, fashion has become more democratic. Prêt designers have blossomed, bloggers get coveted front-row seats, younger designers get dedicated platforms at every fashion week and the trends themselves are trickling down the retail chain.

Masaba Gupta says it's because the focus of fashion weeks all across India has shifted from the foreign buyer to the Indian customer. "We have stopped looking for global credibility," she says. "We have fashion weeks according to our own seasons – Spring/Summer during India summer time and Autumn/Winter in our winter. It's all focused on selling locally." This shift in purchasing power has influenced brand power too. Big brands scramble to be a part of fashion weeks and be associated with designers, old and young. "When the fashion week started, everyone only associated it with glamour: beautiful models walking down the ramp," says Sunil Sethi, president of the Fashion Design Council of India. "Today the India Fashion Week is worth several crores. We have as many as 100 designers and about 200 people writing about

it. Every store in the country will make it a point to attend the fashion week to conduct business." He adds that the Wills India Fashion Week becoming the Amazon India Fashion Week is an indicator of the fact that the fashion business is growing.

All this means, of course, that the way we dress has changed forever. We've found that well-cut, comfortable outfits need not be separate from traditional wear, garments serving a function need not be dull, formal clothing need not be in Western-approved navy and neutrals. New design ideas need not come from looking through an American magazine. Tarun Tahiliani explains it well: "Indians now understand cut and construct, fit and finish and we will have to deliver."

THE ROADBLOCKS

Even established designers agree that 15 years on, we're still a young industry that hasn't received serious international recognition. "The worst is that there is absolutely no government support," laments Rodricks. "There's chaos. Senior designers on fashion week boards squabble over shows. That kind of politics stops younger talent from blooming."

What stands in the way of success is also the way we look at our bodies. "They are still catering to a size 6. Indian women are not usually size 6," says Adams. They are usually size 8-12.

Fashion models themselves have some concerns. It may have become easier to get a gig as a runway model with established modelling agencies, but salaries are still low, says

model Noyonika Chatterjee, who also owns a grooming school. "We need to be paid better. Also, there is no one to look after the models. I have been treated badly and not been paid, and there is nobody I can go to," she says.

THE WAY AHEAD

Things are looking up, and changing even as some issues continue to plague the industry. "Interestingly, these days many designers request us not to give them the premium slot of 9.30pm as they prefer to be present at their stalls most of the time," says Sethi. "The volume of business has gone up. Designers these days take up multiple stalls as they want to showcase collections."

Online sales have started to matter, even for designer wear.

It's made a designer outfit in a faraway big city more accessible, and curated discount sites like Pernia's Pop-Up have made pricing competitive. Designer Raghavendra Singh Rathore says that online retailing has changed the production cycles of fashion – no one wants to wait for two collections a year. "Brands churn out smaller but more cycles per year, without context to season. The emphasis on design is now immense because that determines success."

Rodricks sums it best, "The best part about this industry is that it has the colour, diversity and talent to override the problems that plague us. I am forever the optimist." We are too.

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The New Face Of Indo-Fusion

Sari+trench coat, khadi+crop-top. Indian designers are fusing East and West anew

by Aastha Atray Banan

The bridal look of the '90s was all about thinking East and looking West. Remember those mermaid-style lehengas paired with fitting tops? Those trouser suits (short kurtas with salwars stitched like pants)? What if we told you that Indo-fusion is back? Surely, you're cringing right now.

There's better news this time around. Some Indian designers are modernising the idea using Indian textiles, weaves and printing techniques, and drawing inspiration from international runways. "Burberry's Autumn/Winter 2015 shows used mirrorwork and block printing. Brand India is big," points out designer Shruti Sancheti, 34, who works out of Nagpur. Her last collection featured trench coats, made from the complicated Pochampally weave from Andhra Pradesh, worn over saris.

Her new works include an outfit with zips on the side. When fastened, it's a well fitted gown, when unzipped, it becomes a sari. Tie-dyed and marble-dyed khadi, silk and muslin are used to make crop tops and jackets. It's a clear reflection of the way we live now. "You need your outfits to have a global appeal, and they have to be worn as everyday wear," Sancheti says.



IT'S A WRAP
Shruti Sancheti's trench coat gives an edge to the sari

CROP-TOPS
GO DESI
Shruti Sancheti's jumpsuit goes with a bright khadi crop-top

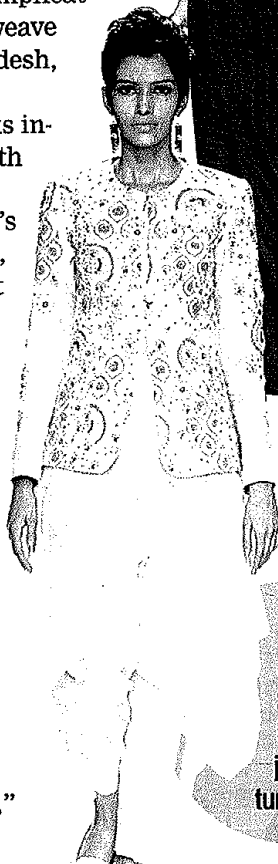


The twist to traditional wear is showing up in the works of fellow designers like Kolkata's Soumitra Mondal. His label Marg uses handloom khadi and jaamdani silk for shift dresses that can also be paired with jeans or tights. "The shift dress is the future," Mondal says, indicating that loose, comfortable clothing will dominate new designs – and they look seriously sophisticated. "Even the anarkali is now floor length to give it that gown look," he says.

Designer Anavila Misra's new collection uses batik and traditional patchwork on loose-fitted tunics meant to be paired with the very Western cigarette pants. "The shorter tunics can be worn with harem pants," she suggests. Her anarkalis are stitched like shirts, with buttons and collars.

Think of the new Indo-fusion as muted, wearable and functional, with none of the "exotic India" clichés from the '90s. "The world is

looking at India. It's only a given that we create modern looks with the resources at hand," says Sancheti. "We are never going to run out."



ARTY
CHIC
Soumitra Mondal teams jackets with tunics

► देश भर की साड़ियों की प्रदर्शनी

हमारे देश में महिलाएं तरह-तरह से साड़ियां पहनती हैं। इनमें बनारसी, रेशमी, सूती, जरी वाली आदि प्रमुख हैं। इन सभी को प्रगति मैदान के हैंडलूम पवेलियन (गेट-2 के पास) एक साथ देखने के साथ खरीदने का भी मौका है। 17 मार्च तक चलने वाली देश भर की साड़ियों की प्रदर्शनी का आयोजन भारत सरकार के कपड़ा मंत्रालय ने किया है। यहां से साड़ियां खरीदने पर बड़ी छूट भी मिल रही है।

समय: सुबह 11 बजे से शाम 7 बजे
मेट्रो स्टेशन: प्रगति मैदान
(ब्लू लाइन)

How the SAD-BJP govt measures up after

The perception that the government's performance had fallen short of expectation was reinforced during last year's LS elections, and SAD-BJP got a chance to work towards midterm course correction. Has perception changed, or reality?

PERCEPTION VS REALITY

THE Parkash Singh Badal-led SAD-BJP government has completed three years of its second consecutive term. When it returned to power in 2012, it was an achievement in itself since no incumbent government in Punjab had managed that feat earlier. Political permutations and combinations apart, it was largely the slogan of development that pulled voters to give the coalition another chance.

The perception that the government's performance had fallen short of the expectation level was reinforced during last year's Lok Sabha elections, when both the Akalis and the BJP were given a stern message by the electorate in the state despite the countrywide wave for Narendra Modi. The only positive for the ruling combine that could possibly emerge out of the poor electoral showing was that it offered a chance of midterm course correction and a rethink of the policies and programmes. So, has the reality on the ground changed for the public perception to change?

As the SAD-BJP government enters the penultimate year of its second term, the Opposition Congress remains faction-ridden but it's the tussle and tension between the alliance partners that is being played out openly. Is that again a clearly visible reality, or a misinterpreted or misconstrued perception, as the government would argue?

The SAD-BJP combine strongly discredits notions of Punjab being bankrupt, non-performing, being a laggard in development with poor governance, of the industry migrating, the flight of capital, being the drug capital of India. Perception versus reality — it's a differentiation that often converges, much to the dislike of the ruling dispensation. So, what is Punjab's perception, and reality?

INDUSTRIAL SECTOR

Policy well received, not investment

Efforts to woo industry yield little, existing units feel ignored by state govt

RUCHIKA M. KHANNA

PUNJAB has come up with one of the best industrial policies — as endorsed by the doyens of Indian industry, including those running multi-billion dollar conglomerates. The state's industrial capital, Ludhiana, is rated as being one of the best places going by the ease of doing business.

The growth of the secondary sector (manufacturing and industry) in the state's Gross State Domestic Product is 26.28 per cent, almost nearing the contribution of primary sector (28.94 per cent) in the GSDP. But here is the contradiction — the investment coming to the state, after the New Industrial Policy was announced in November 2013 and a Progressive Punjab Investment Summit organised a month later, has just been a trickle. Of the investments worth Rs 65,000 crore pledged by the industry for the state, investment worth Rs 9,600 crore in 153 projects has been received. But on the ground, only a handful of these projects have taken off. Land and skilled labour availability continue to be the biggest impediments to industrial growth.

Regional imbalances in the taxation structure — with Punjab having higher taxes — has forced many industrial units in the steel as well as textile sector to close shop here. The existing industry feels it has been completely forgotten by the government and some like the Punjab Spinners Association even launched a negative publicity campaign over its "failure" to protect the interests of the industry.

The government is wooing investors with concessions in value added tax (VAT), stamp duty, central sales tax and electricity duty. In spite of earnest efforts being made by the Akali-BJP government to attract fresh investment, in this time of recession, getting investors to the state seems to be a huge task. With the state also having limited fiscal space for giving concessions to the existing industry, there has been a flight of industry to the other states.

Unconfirmed reports peg the number of industrial units that have shut shop in the state to more than 17,000. As many as 274 industrial units, involving an investment of Rs 3,679.79 crore, are learnt to have moved out to Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir and Uttarakhand. Industry Minister Madan Mohan Mittal says that in spite of comparing the investment actually received vis a vis the figures committed in the Investors Summit, the government must be appreciated for its easy clearances and huge con-

steel as well as textile units to close shop in Punjab

■ 274 industrial units, involving an investment of ₹3,679.79 crore, have moved out to Himachal, Jammu and Kashmir and Uttarakhand

Ludhiana worse off

■ Investment worth ₹2,027.34 cr has been shifted to other states from Ludhiana

■ Malerkotla has lost investment of ₹742.50 crore

■ Gurdaspur has lost ₹461.11 crore

■ In Mandi Gobindgarh, between April and December 2013, the Industry Department reported that 155 steel units had closed down

Not a good read

■ Of investments worth ₹65,000 crore pledged by industry, only ₹9,600 crore in 153 projects has been received. Just a handful of these projects have taken off

■ Existing industry feels it has been forgotten by government. Higher taxes have forced many

Growth figures

Secondary sector (manufacturing and industry) share in Gross State Domestic Product is 26.28 per cent, nearing the contribution of primary sector (28.94 per cent) in GSDP

cessions offered to new investors and in getting investment, when other states are grappling to find investors. "For the existing industry, we are working towards tax rationalisation with neighbouring states, to make them competitive," he adds.

“Because of locational disadvantage, any heavy industry is unlikely to come to Punjab. So the government policy should be more favourable for the light engineering and electronics industry, which has a huge potential to grow and prosper.” RS Sachdeva, CO-CHAIRMAN, PHD CHAMBER

r 3 years of second term

HEALTH SECTOR



Plans aplenty, ground results awaited

Hospitals, specialists, schemes — a lot on anvil, if things work out

VARINDER SINGH

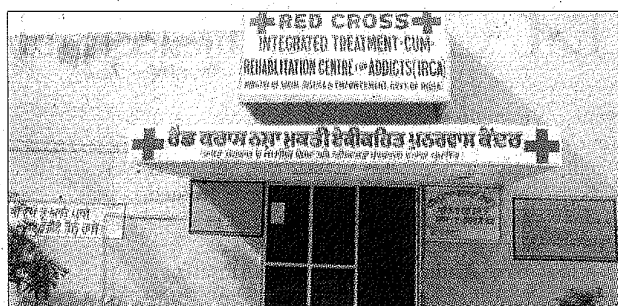
FOR a state confronted with a high incidence of cancer cases, health would in natural course be considered a high priority sector. The SAD-BJP government has not shown any slackness or lack of vision in its plans, it's the implementation part where the results finally have to show.

The cancer death toll has crossed the 11,000-mark in the state during the past one year alone. The Tata Memorial Centre has already started a population-based cancer registry work on the request of the state government, which has allotted land in the upcoming Medicity in Mullanpur near Chandigarh for setting up of the Homi Bhabha Cancer Hospital and Research Centre as part of its "war against cancer".

The state government has allocated Rs 300 crore for infrastructure for cancer treatment in three government medical colleges, apart from a cancer institute coming up at a cost of Rs 120 crore at the Government Medical College in Amritsar. "We are not exactly aware about the factors behind such a high incidence of cancer-related deaths, but the state government is doing its best to contain the cancer monster by creating the best of research and treatment infrastructure in Punjab," says Vikas Garg, Special Secretary, Department of Health. He adds that the Advanced Cancer Diagnostic and Treatment Centre is already functional at Bathinda.

While the Health Department seems to be almost helpless in dealing with swine flu cases, it has shown forward movement when it comes to drug de-addiction, setting up 31 centres during the past one year. The government claims that over 3.5 lakh addicts have already been treated, while more than 13,000 are undergoing treatment. Punjab, which has seen 49 swine flu deaths (official figure), is devoid of its own functional H1N1 testing lab, even as efforts are on to set one up at Amritsar. Dr Deepak Bhatia, the Coordinator of the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme, blames the high number of cases to late reporting of patients in hospitals.

The state government, meanwhile, has appointed 70 specialist doctors during the past one month, even as the Health Department is facing a shortage of 260.



Efforts on drug de-addiction

- Proposed study by Indian Council of Medical Research on extent of drug addiction problem in state
- Central registration for patients of drug abuse on
- Five 50-bed drug de-addiction centres coming up
- 10-bed drug de-addiction wards in all district and sub-divisional hospitals being set up

Mother and Child Health Care

- Punjab awarded ₹109 crore by Centre in 2013 for bringing down Infant Mortality Rate from 30 to 28
- 100-bed special wings in 12 hospitals to be set up at cost of ₹68 cr
- 100 hospitals being equipped with facilities and specialists

Bhagat Puran Singh Sehat Bima Yojana

- Free health insurance for all Blue Card holders
- Health coverage of ₹30,000 per annum

For school kids' health

- Free treatment of school children for heart diseases, cancer, thalassemia
- Annual free health checkup of 30 lakh school children in all government and aided schools and anganwadi centres
- Free treatment of 30 diseases being started

Medical education

- Medical college proposed in Mohali district
- Upgradation of GMC in Amritsar at a cost of ₹200 cr

AGRICULTURE

State's farm crisis continues to grow

Except power subsidy, not much help

SARBJIT DHALIWAL

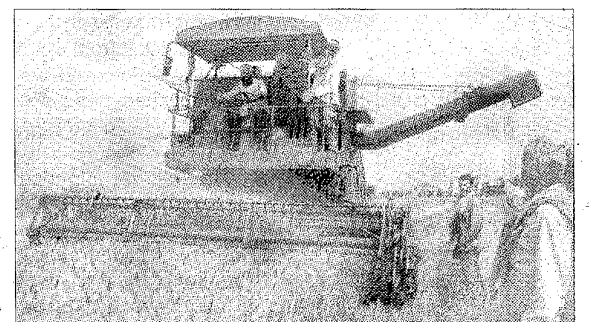
PARKASH SINGH BADAL is perceived to be a pro-farmer Chief Minister because his political support base is mainly the farming community. In spite of strong pressure from coalition partner BJP, he has not withdrawn the free power facility to the farm sector.

However, the stark reality is that Punjab's farm sector is in dire straits. Unrest among the farmers is mounting by the day and for a large section, farming has become unviable due to the rising input cost. The challenges include stagnating production, deteriorating soil health, dipping groundwater table, heavy debt burden on majority of farmers, the use of intoxicants by the rural youth and the high incidence of land-related litigation in absence of long-due revenue reforms.

Following the Shanta Kumar committee report, word has spread that the Minimum Support Price (MSP) backed food-grain procurement system may be abandoned, leaving the farm produce at the mercy of market forces. Punjab has been repeatedly told to stop growing paddy and to move on to some other crops. The state is virtually groping in the dark to find a viable and widely acceptable alternative to traditional crops such as paddy. It had prepared a lengthy diversification plan but that is heading nowhere in absence of effective support from the Centre.

More than 60 per cent rural population of the state is directly dependent on the farm sector. Its share in the gross state domestic product (GSDP, constant prices) has come down to 20.83 per cent from about 50 per cent in 1960s.

Compared to agriculture, the share of the manufacturing sector in the GSDP has been revolving around 30 per cent. The share of the service sector has grown rapidly, exceeding 50 per cent. The growth rate in the farm sector has been woefully low over the past fiscal years and was just 0.44 per cent in 2013-14.



Rural indebtedness up

■ On an average, the rural indebtedness per household in the state has gone up from ₹3.22 lakh five years ago to ₹4.79 lakh, according to Prof Satish Verma, RBI Chair Professor at the Centre for Research in Rural and Industrial Development in Chandigarh.

■ The study points to dominant persistence of non-institutional sources of credit. Prof Verma says that while loans from institutional sources are limited to production purposes, the arthiya or commission agent obliges villagers with more loans for consumption purposes.