

## **Experts discuss role of skill development in promoting leather exports**

World Trade Center Jaipur, in association with Sector Trade Courses Committee - Leather Sector (a committee formed by the Directorate General of Training, New Delhi) organized a virtual stakeholder consultation meeting. The event brought together subject matter experts from Government training institutions, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, sector specific councils, industry leaders, researchers, trade facilitators and technology services providers to discuss the importance of skill development to promote leather exports.

Ms. Rinku Soni, Training Officer, NSTI W, Jaipur, in her speech, introduced the National Skill Training Institute (NSTI) and mentioned that its objective is to train ITI students in the country. She further informed that vocational training facilities through National Skill Training Institutes have been established through a network of 14 NSTIs and 18 NSTI (W) at Noida, Mumbai, Bangalore, Trivandrum, Panipat, Kolkata, Tura, Indore, Allahabad, Vadodara, Jaipur, Rajpura, Shimla, Agartala, Patna, Goa, Jammu and Trichy.

Mr. V. Babu, Dy. Director and Principal, NSTI, (W), Indore, while making a presentation on the Directorate General of Training (DGT), which is formed by the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (ASDE) mentioned that DGT has about 15,000 Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) both government and private, located in various states of India. Several training programs are conducted through this network to meet the needs of approximately 24 lakh students, trainers and industry persons every year, providing skilled work force in different sectors with different levels of expertise.

Mr. V. Babu further elaborated about the major functions of DGT, a few of which are, i) formulating overall policies, norms and standards for vocational training, ii) diversifying, updating and expanding training facilities for craftsman, iii) craft instructor training, iv) regulate and widen the scope of training of apprentices under the Apprenticeship Act, 1961, v) organizing vocational training programs for women, vi) providing vocational guidance and employment counseling to SC/ST persons as well as persons with disabilities etc.

Ms. Arpita Paul, Executive Director, Indian Leather Products Association, Kolkata, introduced (ILPA) as a premier representative body of manufacturers and exporters of leather and leather products across the country with a head office in Kolkata and a Regional Office in Chennai. "ILPA works actively to bring together manufacturer-exporters and merchant-exporters of leather products of India on a common platform to stimulate growth and development of the leather sector. It strives to develop and maintain a reciprocal relationship with professional bodies, import associations and the Chambers of Commerce abroad in order to support and promote export of leather products. Also, ILPA takes great pride in providing training and skill-development to the underprivileged youth of rural Bengal and helps them with job placements within the industry," mentioned Ms. Paul.

Key member to the Sectoral Trades Course Committee (STCC), Mr. Rajeev Mishra, HR Head, Dawar Footwear Industries, Agra, in his address, mentioned, "Sectoral Trades Course Committee (STCC) is constituted to standardize the processes of training, assessment and certification system of a particular sector area. He further elaborated on the functions of the STCC, a few of which are i) assess and analyse demand of human resource in a sector periodically, ii) identify areas in which manpower is to be trained and prepare a roadmap for fulfilling skill training needs, iii) segregate demand nationally and internationally, and within national demand, further separate it state wise, based on economic activity mapping etc."

Ms. Prena Verma, Director, Creative India, Kanpur, in her address, mentioned, "Given the fact that leather sector is recognised under the Government's 'Make in India' programme, and the hide market exists for more than 150 years, there is vast requirement for skilled manpower, setup and upgradation of quality units and standardization in the processes, all of which can be made possible by adequate support from State and Central Government, investments in Research and Development by large units in the sector and setting up of formal training institutions in a Public Partnership mode." Ms. Verma also recommended new entrants to diversify their product range and start exploring newer markets.

Mr. Kiran V.N., AD (H), HSC Jodhpur, Office of DC (Handicrafts), Ministry of Textiles, Government of India, who himself has been involved in initiation of a number of training programs for the sector, welcomed possibilities of conducting joint training programs for artisans in Jodhpur, Barmer and Jaisalmer. He also urged the younger generations of artisans to stand up to the challenges post the COVID 19 breakout and support their family businesses after gaining thorough understanding of information technology, banking & finance, and marketing.

Mr. Atul Singh, Assistant Professor, Fashion and life style accessory Design Development Department, National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT), Jodhpur while briefing the delegates about NIFT, mentioned that it is the pioneering institute of fashion education in the country and has been in the frontline of providing professional human resource to the textile and apparel industry. Mr. Singh further mentioned that over the years NIFT has also been working as a knowledge service provider for the Union and State governments in the area of design development and positioning of handlooms and handicrafts.

Mr. A. Fayaz Ahmad, Deputy Director, Council for Leather Exports (CLE), Chennai (sponsored by Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Govt. of India) shared that CLE's activities are directed towards assisting its members in extending their global reach, thereby increasing their exports. CLE caters to the needs of the leather exporters and serves as a connecting bridge between Indian leather exporters and buyers all over the world. This way, CLE acts as a facilitator for building relationships between overseas buyers/investors and their Indian counterparts to promote exports from the Indian leather industry. As a government sponsored nodal agency, CLE is a one-stop source for international investors to not only access all the information, but also avail the guidance they need, to set up a successful venture in the Indian marketplace.

Mr. Ahmad further added, "CLE's status as the apex Leather Export Promotion Organization in India calls for its active involvement with the Central and State Governments in the evolution of suitable action plans and formulation and dissemination of pro-active Government policies to promote exports as well as the infrastructure and fiscal support available to exporters. Its dedicated efforts have fetched rich dividends, which is exhibited in the form of current high export growth rates and India's significance in the global leather market."

During the program, industry experience was shared by Mr. Wasim Khan, Director, Saju Art and Craft, Jodhpur, National Awardee, Mr. Mohan, Specialist in manufacturing Polo Shoes from Jodhpur and Mr. Subhash Bakolia, Proprietor, S. Leather Handicrafts, Jaipur.

Mr. Navneet Agarwal, Assistant Director, World Trade Center Jaipur proposed vote of thanks for the event.

**The webinar was held on July 19, 2021**

