

“Shilp Samagam is not merely a fair, but a bridge to self-reliance and dignity” – Dr. Virendra Kumar inaugurates ‘Shilp Samagam–2026’

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“This is not merely an exhibition of products, but a celebration of self-reliance, dignity and social empowerment.” With these words, the Union Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment, Dr. Virendra Kumar, today inaugurated the Shilp Samagam Mela–2026 at ‘Vallabh Sadan’, Sabarmati Riverfront, Ahmedabad.



Extending greetings to all present on the occasion of the upcoming festival of Holi, the Minister stated that the fair symbolizes the Ministry's sustained commitment towards economically empowering the targeted sections of society and integrating them into the mainstream.

The Minister informed that since 2014, nearly 100 Shilp Samagam Melas have been organized or participated in by the Department of Social Justice and Empowerment. During 2025–26, five (05) such melas have been organized, and more are planned for 2026–27. He noted that Ahmedabad, known for its association with the freedom movement, Mahatma Gandhi's Sabarmati Ashram, and as the karmabhoomi of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, is an appropriate venue for such an inclusive event.



The Ministry is implementing various schemes for the social and economic upliftment of Scheduled Castes, Other Backward Classes, Safai Karamcharis, Divyangjans, De-notified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes (DNT/NT/SNT), Senior Citizens and the Transgender community. The Minister stated

that fairs like Shilp Samagam provide a direct marketing platform to artisans and beneficiaries belonging to these sections.



The mela, being held from February 26 to March 4, features 75 stalls allocated to artisans from 14 States. A wide range of handicraft products are on display, including Lucknowi Chikankari, Banarasi sarees, Chanderi and Maheshwari textiles, Bhagalpuri Tussar silk, Jaipuri and Kolhapuri footwear, Agate stone work, bamboo products, Kota Doria, and Carpets etc.

The Minister further informed that for artisans who are unable to participate directly, the Ministry has developed the 'Bharat Tulip' online platform to facilitate the sale of their products, which has been integrated with various e-commerce platforms. A 'Bharat Tulip Showroom' has also been launched at the mela to connect more beneficiaries with market opportunities.



Under the SEED Scheme for the empowerment of De-notified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes, 5,581 Women Self-Help Groups have been formed across eight States. These groups are being provided Revolving Funds, Entry Point Funds, and skill training. Under the health component, approximately 75,000 Ayushman Cards have been distributed.

The Minister stated that on March 13, 2024, Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi dedicated the 'PM-SURAJ Portal' to the nation, enabling transparent and accessible delivery of concessional loan schemes of the Ministry to targeted beneficiaries. The 'PM-DAKSH Portal' has been developed for skill training, and the 'SFMP Portal' for scholarships. These digital initiatives have significantly enhanced transparency and efficiency in implementation.

He further informed that under the Ministry's 'VISVAS' yojana, eligible beneficiaries are provided a 5 percent interest subvention on bank loans. The 'NAMASTE' scheme ensures safety and dignity for workers engaged in septic tank and sewer-related work. The Apex Corporations under the Ministry have so far extended loan assistance to nearly 60 lakh individuals and their families, and provided skill training to more than 6 lakh youth.

Expressing confidence, the Minister said that Shilp Samagam Mela at Ahmedabad will not only boost the sales of artisans' products but also connect them with self-reliance, dignity and new opportunities. Concluding his address, he conveyed his best wishes to all participants and reaffirmed the Ministry's continued commitment to bringing marginalized communities into the mainstream.

S.M/D.G

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