

National Handloom Designers' Conclave 2026 Showcases Design-Led Innovation to Strengthen India's Handloom Sector

प्रविष्टि तिथि: 10 AUG 2026 7:23PM by PIB Delhi

The Office of the Development Commissioner (Handlooms), Ministry of Textiles, Government of India, successfully organised the National Handloom Designers' Conclave 2026 today at Dr. Ambedkar International Centre, New Delhi. The conclave brought together policymakers, eminent fashion designers, textile experts, academicians, cluster designers, master weavers, exporters, retailers and other stakeholders to deliberate on strengthening India's handloom sector through design-led innovation and market-oriented product development.



The event was graced by Smt. Neelam Shami Rao, Secretary, Ministry of Textiles, in the presence of Dr. M. Beena, Development Commissioner (Handlooms), Ms. Amrit Raj, Development Commissioner (Handicrafts), Sh. Akhilesh Kumar, DDG, Ministry of Textiles and other distinguished dignitaries. The dignitaries also visited an exhibition showcasing the shortlisted products developed under the National Handloom Design Contest 2026. The exhibition highlighted innovative design interventions and contemporary product development initiatives undertaken across nine handloom clusters from eight States, namely Miranchak Cluster, Purba Bardhaman Cluster, Vanitha Cluster, Dev Bhoomi Bharari Cluster, Dwarka Cluster, Khurkul Cluster, Ridrol Cluster, Imphal East, and Kondapalakala Cluster.





In the inaugural address, Smt. Neelam Shami Rao, Secretary, Ministry of Textiles, noted that the future of the handloom sector rests on strong institutional support as much as on the skill of India's weavers. She highlighted the sector's role in providing livelihood to over 35 lakh persons, and the Ministry's supporting ecosystem of 29 Weavers Service Centres and 357 Handloom Cluster Development Programmes strengthening production, capacity and market linkages. She noted that 80 design-potential clusters were taken through a structured design process this year, with around 80 designers now engaged directly to help translate design into premium pricing and higher weaver incomes. She reaffirmed the Ministry's commitment to strengthening this ecosystem in the years ahead.

Welcoming the dignitaries and participants, Dr. M. Beena, Development Commissioner (Handlooms), highlighted the importance of design as a catalyst for enhancing the value, competitiveness and sustainability of Indian handloom products. She underscored the Ministry's continued efforts to foster collaboration between designers and weavers, enabling traditional crafts to respond to evolving market demands.

A major highlight of the conclave was the National Handloom Design Contest 2026 Prize Ceremony, where outstanding cluster designers were honoured for excellence in the Apparel, Home Furnishing, Craft Revival and Jury's Special Recognition categories. The prizes recognised outstanding design interventions that seamlessly blended traditional craftsmanship with contemporary aesthetics and evolving market preferences.

The conclave featured three thematic panel discussions on Design Innovation and Market Competitiveness, Sustainable Cluster Development and the Future of Indian Handlooms, and Design Thinking for Value Creation in Indian Handloom. Leading designers, academicians and industry experts shared insights on emerging consumer trends, sustainability, branding, exports, technology integration and strategies for enhancing the competitiveness of Indian handloom products in domestic as well as international markets.



The exhibition drew an enthusiastic response from participants, offering a glimpse into innovative handloom products developed through structured design interventions across selected clusters. It showcased the immense potential of designer-weaver collaborations in creating contemporary, high-value products while safeguarding India's diverse weaving heritage.

The National Handloom Designers' Conclave 2026 reaffirmed the Ministry of Textiles' commitment to positioning design as a key driver of innovation, value addition and market expansion in the handloom sector. The deliberations and knowledge shared during the conclave are expected to further strengthen the designer-weaver ecosystem, foster sustainable livelihoods and enhance the global competitiveness of Indian handloom products.

(रिलीज़ आईडी: 2297314) आगंतुक पटल : 803
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