

BACKGROUND

The Handloom textiles sector plays a vital role in the socio economic structure of the country in terms of providing employment, production of cloth and value addition while at the same time preserving and propagating the Country's rich cultural heritage. The sector provides direct and indirect employment to more than 43 lakh weavers and allied workers in the country which contains a large number of people from the scheduled caste/Tribe, backward and minority community. This sector is as old as the human civilization itself and is being sustained by transferring of skill from one generation to the next. At present the sector accounts for approximately 15% of the country's Textiles production and makes a significant contribution in export earnings. The handloom products have great demand in the National and International market because of their uniqueness and exclusivity of design, nature of producing small batch size so that a particular design is not flooded in the market at one go and its eco friendliness.

Assam has a great Textile tradition. Since time immemorial the Assamese women, irrespective of caste and social status, have been weaving the daily requirement of their cloths and apparels and have been taking pride in her works. Weaving in the handloom has been a very respectable day-to-day job for the Assamese women. This weaving tradition has been handed down from generation to generation by the Assamese women folk who excelled in production of extremely beautiful designs in their looms. During his first visit to Assam in 1921, Mahatma Gandhi wrote that..." Every Assamese woman is a born weaver...and she weaves fairy tales in her loom"

Weaving in silk along with cotton yarns has been practised in the state since long and all the three major silks viz. muga, eri and mulbary were known to the Assamese weavers and rearers. In the days of the Assam kings however, wearing of apparels made of silk fabric was mainly the prerogatives of the richer and higher echelon of the society. Assam kings and other higher ranks wore apparels made of a special variety of muga silk known as “Mejankari Silk”, which was reared in a special tree (Chapa) and was generally adored as a better quality silk than the common golden muga. The Assam kings created separate administrative machinery to look after the silkworm feed plants, silkworm rearing, reeling of silk yarn & weaving of silk fabrics. Primarily due to royal encouragement and patronage, the spinning & weaving had become indispensable profession of every Assamese household. The social status of muga silk culture was very high and the practice of silkworm rearing reeling & weaving of muga silk was most common than other silk.

During the British Rule, the compulsions on silk rearing & weaving disappeared. Yet, these activities were still regarded as necessary accomplishments for every household. During 1832-33 (Dec-April), 1833-34 (May-June) & 1834-35 (July-June), Assam exported 69, 291 & 224 maunds respectively of muga silk thread to Bengal, the value of which was placed at Rs. 13,973.00, Rs. 58,220.00 and Rs. 53,889.00 respectively. The total value of export of muga raw silk from Lakhimpur District during 1871-72 was about Rs. 60,900.00. During 1882-83 & 1897-98, the total value of export of silk from Assam was Rs. 2,04,930.00 & Rs. 3,66,310.00 respectively.

In Assam the handloom textiles sector is at present giving employment to a large number of people particularly in the rural areas and in this respect it is

next only to the agricultural sector. However the biggest problem being faced by the sector is that the handloom weavers being unorganized face problems in supplying their products of large orders in time due to absence of systematized production wherein they may cater to the stringent quality and timely delivery. This adversely affects the market of hand woven products. Besides, the sector is facing stiff competition from the power loom sector which is flooding the market with cheap cloths, making hand weaving a less remunerative profession. The result, particularly in Assam is that hand weaving has been growing very slowly as a profession. Therefore there is a need to bridge the gap through infrastructure development, skill up-gradation, design and product development as per market demand through a comprehensive state handloom policy, so that the weavers get a vibrant market and better remuneration for their products.

ASSAM HANDLOOM –SOME CHARACTERSTIC FEATURES

a) Highest number of looms and weavers

The 3rd Handloom Census conducted by the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) in 2009-10 indicated that the total weaver household units recorded a decline in the country from the first (29.9 lakh weavers households), to the second (25.3 lakh weaver households) and the third (22.6 lakh weaver households) Handloom Census, indicating that the number of household in the sector has exhibited a declining trend over the last two decades.

The North Eastern region (NER) on the other hand showed an increase in the number of weaver households from the second (14.5 lakh weaver households) to the third (15.1 lakh weaver households) census. Assam also showed an increasing trend in the said period.

Sl No	Details (Source, Directorate of H & T, Assam)	Census of 2009-10	Census of 1995-96	Census of 1987-88
1	No. of weavers and allied workers	43.32 lakh	65.51 lakh	
2	No. of weavers household in NER	15.1 lakh	14.5 lakh	
3	No. of weavers in Assam	14.01lakh*	11.96 lakh**	17.16lakh* **
4	No. of looms	23.77 lakh	34.87lakh	
5	No. of looms in NER	15.50lakh	18.23 lakh	
6	No. of loom in Assam	11.12lakh*	13.22lakh **	14.09lakh* **
7	Women weaver (%)	77.90	60.60	
8	Women weavers (%) in Assam	99.07*	89.71**	91.89***
9	Man-days worked per weaver/ annum	234days	197days	
10	Total man-days worked by weavers household during census year	5,313lakh	4,977lakh	
11	Share of full time weavers to total weavers	64%	44%	
12	Share of full time weavers to total weavers	49.60%*	8.69%**	22.37%***

13	Share of weavers household reporting > 60% income from handlooms & related activities	35%	31%	
14	Share of idle looms	4%	10%	

* Marked figures are as per National Handloom Census 2009-10. However the total weavers in the State is calculated at 18,71,134 Nos. But No of looms could not be estimated.

** Marked figures are as per National Handloom Census 1995-96.

*** Marked figures are as per National Handloom Census 1987-88.

(b) Large number of weavers' clusters

During the last few decades, a number of rearers' and weavers' clusters have been created under various Centrally Sponsored schemes and other rural development schemes. There were also many large existing clusters such as Sualkuchi and Vijay Nagar in Kamrup district, Kokoya and Chotlar par in Nalbari district, Kochua in Nagaon district etc. besides many small clusters. These entities can be gainfully utilized by converging various developmental initiatives of the Govt and other organisations for increased production of silk yarns and hand woven cloths. These clusters can also be mapped to JFMs and Degraded Forests for increased production of silk, particularly Muga, if a mission mode project can be initiated. Thus there is a huge scope for developing handloom sector in the state.

(c) Well spread and experienced weavers' co-operatives

The concept of Handloom Weavers' Cooperative Society was introduced in the State under the Assam Cooperative Societies act, 1949, (Act-1 of 1951) for organized development of the Handloom weaving sector. A three tier cooperative system comprising of (1) Apex Level Society, (ii) Regional Level/ District Level Society and (iii) Primary Weavers Cooperative Society functions in the state for the benefit of the handloom weavers. The Government of Assam in the Cooperation department had delegated the powers of Registration, Audit, inspection, Management etc. of Handloom Cooperative Societies to the Director, Handloom & Textiles, Assam by designating him as the Ex-officio, Additional Registrar of Cooperative Societies (Handloom) as per provision of the Act in 1985. The Directorate of Handloom Textiles has a strong cooperative section to make inspection and audit of the Societies regularly and also to guide the societies to hold the Annual General Meeting in time.

The only Apex level Handloom Cooperative Society under the Directorate in the State is the Assam Apex Weavers and Artisans Cooperative Federation Ltd. (ARTFED). The basic business of ARTFED is to supply yarn to the member Primary Cooperative Societies, to procure finished products of hand woven fabrics from them and to sell the products through their established 51 show rooms inside and outside the State. The ARTFED also implements different scheme of Government of India and State Government for marketing promotion of the hand woven products of the weavers of the state.

Two Regional Level Societies and Five District Level Societies functioning in the state. The procedure of business of these societies is similar to that of the Apex Society but these are confined only to the respective region and district.

There are about 4000 Primary Weavers Cooperative Societies (PWCS) registered under the Directorate in the State. Each Society has a minimum

of 100 weaver members. These societies are involved directly in production of handloom fabrics. Each society is run by a Managing Committee consisting of 15 members as per provision of the Bye Law under amended Assam Cooperative Act,2007. The Managing Committee is headed by an elected President. A Secretary is appointed by the Committee to execute the resolutions taken in the Committee meeting.

(d) Inadequate coverage under co-operative fold

Despite the fact that the area of operation of the Handloom Co-operative societies are well spread the coverage of weavers by these societies is not more than 30% of the total weavers. Thus there are a large number of weavers outside and lot to do to bring maximum number of weavers under co-operative fold.

(e) Preponderance of women weavers

As can be seen from the table above 90% of the weavers of the state are women. This on the other hand reflects that the handloom Textiles production has not grown as a profession in the state. Except in a few commercially developed clusters such as Sualkuchi in Kamrup district, Kokoya in Nalbari district Kochua in Nagaon district etc. men folks are normally not seen near the loom. The women folks normally weave in their handlooms during their leisure time to supplement their family income or to weave their own cloth and hence the capacity utilization of the looms is far below the optimal level and production per loom in the state is one of the lowest in the country. Thus, whereas handloom sector contributes about 15% of the total textiles production in the country, in Assam handloom contributes less than 8% of the requirement of fabric of the state. This is a weak area which needs to be addressed.

(f) An elaborated administrative system

There is an elaborate administrative system in the State to look after the sector for the last 60 years albeit poorly maintained infrastructure under Handloom Textiles and Sericulture Department. This Department has the following six verticals under its direct administrative control.

- I. The Directorate of Handloom Textiles
- II. The Directorate of Sericulture
- III. The Assam Government Marketing Corporation (AGMC)
- IV. The Khadi And Village Industries Board (KVIB)
- V. The Sericulture College
- VI. The Assam Apex Weavers And Artisans Co-operative Federation Ltd. (ARTFED)

These entities have a large number of assets involving the whole range from production to marketing of silk and textiles. These include valuable land, farms, rearing, weaving and Training centres, buildings, design centres, cocoon banks, yarn banks and marketing outlets in and outside the State,

The Directorate of Handloom & Textile is headed by a Director who is a senior officer of the State Civil Service. He is also the Ex-officio Addl. Registrar of Cooperative Societies for Handloom & Power loom Coop. Societies and exercises all powers conferred upon the Register under the provisions of the Assam Coop. Societies Act, 1949 (Act 1 of 1950). He is assisted in discharging his duties by a army of 2098 staffs at the Directorate, Zonal offices, District offices, Sub-Divisional Offices, Research & Designing Centre etc.

Central Government agencies in the State have also been playing their respective roles in the sector. Important among them are :

- (a) Central Silk Board (CSB), Regional Office with its range of Research and Extension Centres,
- (b) Branch Office of National Handloom Development Corporation (NHDC).
- (c) Indian Institute of Handloom Technology (IIHT).
- (d) Weavers' Service Centre, (WSC) etc.

There is also a regional entity under the administrative control of Ministry of Development of North East Region (DoNER), called North East Handlooms and Handicrafts Development Corporation (NEHHDC) located at Guwahati.

(g) Silk and other raw materials

Assam does not produce much cotton. But it is hugely rich in production of raw material of other staple fibres like silk, Jute, Ramie, bamboo etc. It is the only place in the world that produces all the four commercially important silks viz. Eri, Muga, Mulberry and Tasar. It produces 80% , and 64% respectively of Muga and Eri silk alone. Together with the other NE states it produces 99% and 92% respectively of the two silks.

Muga is adored world over for its lustrous golden colour and therefore known worldwide as the golden silk. This silk has extremely high tensile strength and has the important capability of absorbing UV rays, which makes it a very useful material for umbrella. No other country on earth produces this beautiful silk and therefore this silk holds great potentiality in the Textiles scenario of the state. The state produces about 125 MT of Muga silk every year and has earned GI certification on Muga because of its endemic nature.

The other important silk is the Eri, which is famous worldwide as the non-violent silk. It is called non-violent silk because the pupae inside the cocoon need not be killed in order to extract the silk. No other silk on earth has this

peculiar and adorable property and in all cases the pupae must necessarily be killed to extract the silk. Assam produces about 2600 MT of Eri silk yearly which constitutes about 64% of the countries production.

The best thing about Eri silk is that it is most versatile of all silks and can produce all kinds of cloths. It is extremely skin friendly and hence produces best quality garments for babies. It has the same thermal insulating capacity as wool and hence can be used as a softer and more skin friendly substitute of wool. All kinds of apparels like under garments sarees , shirts, pants, shawl, and eblankets and quilt, etc. can be made out of this versatile silk.

These two silks can really revolutionize the handloom textiles sector if properly harnessed.

(h) Scope for increased production of silk

At present Eri, Muga and Mulberry cultivation occupies approximately 8900 Hactres, 11,000 Hectres and 7800 Hectres respectively of land in the state including both Govt farm lands and private lands. There is also good scope for increasing the area of seri food plantation in the state particularly the food plantation of Muga (Som) if the degraded Forest areas already covered under Joint Forest Managements (JFMs) can be put to use. An estimated 27,196 hactres of degraded forest area is available for utilization for the purpose.

Degraded area available in RFs=	24005.27
Degraded area available in PRFs=	3165.82
Degraded area available in USFs=	25.00

Host plantation (Som) for Muga silk worm can be raised in the degraded reserve forests and fringe areas in addition to the Government/ Private lands.

For such intervention, Ministry of Environment and Forest has already delegated the powers to Divisional Forest Officers, vide F No.2-1/2003-FC dated 7-6-2004 to allow such plantations. These officers are under the direct control and superintendence of the State Government. Thus there is a good scope to increase Muga silk production by at least three fold.

(i) Low consumption of silk

The average consumption of raw materials in percentage for production of Handloom Fabric in the State is as follows :

Approximate Percentage of use							
Muga silk	Eri Silk	Mulberry silk	Cotton	Wool	Acrylic	Polyester	others
6.27	12.20	7.33	53.00	5.07	9.20	4.87	2.07

Whereas the state produces 80% and 64% of Muga and Eri silk of the country, the consumption of Muga as raw material is limited to about 6.27 percent and that of Eri silk is limited to about 12.20 percent. Thus most of the Muga and Eri produced in the state are exported raw.

Details of weavers based on use of raw materials (yarn)

Sl.No	Type of Raw Material(Yarn)	User households
1	Muga user	0.35%
2	Eri	0.59%
3	Cotton	85.56%
4	Viscos and blends	0.62%

5	Mulberry	0.33%
6	Other	1.11%
7	Wool	9.32%
8	Zari	0.03%
9	Polyester	2.05%
10	Jute	0.04%

Source Handloom Census 2009-10

(j)Geographical indication registry for Muga

Of late Assam's Muga silk has been added to the list of products granted the protection of geographical indication (GI). It has become the 38th product that has got protection from the GI Registry in Chennai.

The patent information Centre, under the aegis of Assam Science Technology and Environment Council (PIC, ASTEC), had applied for the registration and done the scientific fact-finding work to get GI on muga silk, GI protection will bring in standardization of processes, which in turn would help commercialization and export of the product.

STATE HANDLOOM POLICY

The Government of Assam has been following a policy of promoting and encouraging the handloom sector through a number of policies and programmes since independence. The Directorate of Handloom Textiles was created in 1983 by bifurcating the original department of Sericulture and Weaving and since then the Directorate has been working for qualitative and

quantitative improvement of the sector. In the face of growing competitiveness in the textile industry both in national and international market and the free trade opportunities emerging the post MFA environment, a growing need has been felt for adopting a focused, yet flexible and holistic approach in the sector to facilitate handloom weavers to meet the challenges of a global environment. A need has also been felt to empower weavers to chart out a sustainable path for growth and diversification in line with emerging market trend. Keeping the Strength and Weaknesses of the Handloom Textiles sector and its historical/cultural significance in view, the following policy has been formulated to steer the sector towards its sustainable development goal.

This policy will remain effective for five years from First December 2017 till Thirtieth November 2022.

Vision:

A strong and vibrant Handloom Textiles industry of Assam carrying an internationally renowned brand name of excellent craftsmanship offering sustainable and decent livelihood to millions of weavers and artisans of the state.

Objectives:

- To make Handloom Textiles sector a sustainable source of employment for both the urban and rural people of Assam.
- To patronize handloom products as great harbinger of cultural Heritage of the state and motivate both weavers and users to take pride in manufacturing and wearing handloom products of Assam
- To find out the key gaps in the sector such as non or low availability of raw materials, lack of organized production system, lack of working capital,

lack of timely up-gradation of looms, lack of infrastructure, lack of product diversification and market linkages etc and find out long term sustainable solution to these gaps.

- To strengthen the production base for taking up production of value added utility based contemporary products.
- To build capacity of the weavers and artisans engaged in manufacture of hand woven products through skill up-gradation design & product innovation and infrastructural support.
- To promote investment, both private and institutional, in the sector for production of high quality handloom fabrics to cater to the demands of both National and International market.
- To provide a conducive business environment for export focussed production of handloom fabric so that it can grow as a profession and the per capita production increases.
- To market Handloom products aggressively in and outside the state as also in the global market by providing linkage to the leading exporters and retailers so that the handloom sector can absorb more people by creating more job opportunities and good remuneration.
- To update the weavers and artisans about the latest techniques of weaving and about modern trend of apparel and garmenting for enhanced quality and volume

ENHANCEMENT OF PRODUCTION

For enhanced productivity of hand woven fabric and other handicraft products cluster development approach will be given due stress. Individual effort will also be encouraged through formulation of viable schemes. State shares of the central sector schemes for cluster development projects will be

released on preferential basis. Individual weavers and artisan will also get due attention.

Systematic and organized production and marketing being an important aspects of the sector, formation of handloom weavers' cooperative societies will be encouraged with participation of actual weavers for their mutual benefit. Efforts will thus be given to bring the weavers to organized mode for better production and better capacity to bargain.

Loans and subsidies for entrepreneurs engaged in production and marketing of handloom products will be made available through various central sector and state sector schemes. Schemes to facilitate institutional finance to handloom and handicraft sector will be formulated to help the weavers in getting easy financial assistance besides creating facilities to get grants in aid.

Handloom Textiles offices/production centres of the state will be revamped and systematically modernized to cater to the need of the modern day weavers. Information Technology will be used for enhanced efficacy. Weavers' Extension Service Units (WESU) will be strengthened with sufficient working capital and other infrastructural facilities to help poor weavers earn their livelihood without the exploitation of middle men.

SKILL UPGRADATION

Weavers' skill up gradation has two important aspects. The first is to update the weavers about the new and modern techniques of weaving, designing and marketing and the second is to create more skilled weavers in the state for higher production on one hand and create employment opportunities on the other hand. Training of weavers and artisans will be given emphasis keeping in mind these two important aspects. Training modules will be developed accordingly and existing training syllabi of the training centres and institutes will

be periodically revised and updated for the benefit of weavers engaged in the production of low value items, who may not otherwise be able to survive the competition consequent on globalization. The training schemes for weavers shall have the objective of upgrading their skills to enable them to find alternative employment in handloom weaving and handicraft. The Handloom training Centres and Handloom training Institutes of the department will be upgraded with modern amenities for perfect learning and more such centres/institutes will be set up keeping the need of the time in view. Refresher course of training for the Instructors will be arranged from time to time which will include educational visits to other states of the country for learning the current trends of weaving, designing and marketing. Such visits will also be available for select weavers and master trainers. Other training programmes will also be organized from time to time to train weavers and other unemployed persons to impart the skills of weaving. Master trainers from other states as well as expert faculties from institutes of repute such as NIFT, NID etc will be hired for improvement of skill of design development of the local weavers and artisans.

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Uniqueness in design is the main forte of hand woven products. In power looms thousands of metres of cloth of a particular design may be produced. But in handlooms a single design can be seen in a few pieces of fabric only which is a unique feature of hand woven garments and apparels. This uniqueness of hand woven products if properly cultivated, can be the main weapon of handloom sector against the onslaught of power looms and this can save the sector and the millions of weavers and artisans connected in the trade. Research and Development works for creation and development of newer and more trendy designs as well as product improvement in handloom products and apparels is

therefore one of the most important activity of the handloom Textiles Department engaged in growth and survival of handloom sector. The departmental budget will therefore have good provision for research and design initiatives and all efforts should therefore be made for creation of better facilities and engagement of qualified designers and experts in the field. Effective system for support of research and development, design input, skill up gradation and market linkage will be designed and evolved in close cooperation of the central government. The activities of the Handloom Textiles department will be effectively dovetailed with the activities of the centres of design excellence like NIFT and NID etc. These and other National centres for design will be encouraged to set up their outreach centres in the state. All facilities will be given to these institutions for better service delivery. Special Trainings under skilled muster trainers both inside and outside the state may be organised as a skill up gradation activity among the weavers. Excursion programme for the weavers may also be arranged for better appreciation of design and market trend of handloom product in the country. Research and Development work for improvement of looms and other accessories will also be systematically carried out.

PROTECTION MEASURES

As a measure of safeguard to the handloom sector from the onslaught of power looms and to protect the interest of millions of weavers and artisans involved in the trade, Government intervention has become essential to curb the illegal activities of unscrupulous traders who indulge in flooding the market with cheap fabrics made in power looms which are otherwise prevented from manufacturing in power looms under the implementation of Hank Yarn Obligation Order and Reservation Orders issued under the Handloom

(Reservation of Articles for Production) Act 1985. The Government will monitor enforcement of the provisions of the Handloom (Reservation of Articles for Production) Act 1985 and Rules/Orders framed there under and strict action will be taken against the persons found violating the same.

MARKETING FACILITIES

To help the sector grow and bring a sense of professionalism among the weavers and artisans, creation of facilities for easy and quick marketing of hand woven products will be necessary. This will on one hand require value addition in handloom products through design and quality development and arrangement of facilities for easy marketing of hand woven products. To boost merchandising and marketing of handloom products the Master weavers and Entrepreneurs may be assisted in producing and collecting value added fabrics in handloom for markets outside the state. Marketing of such products in Handloom Expos, Melas etc. both within and outside may be organised with Govt. assistance. New and innovative schemes for production of market oriented products will be encouraged and weavers, artisans and entrepreneurs may be financially assisted. Joint ventures may also be encouraged both at the domestic and international levels to boost product quality and capturing markets. Special market complexes for exclusive sale of handloom products of the state and outside may also be set up to facilitate buying and selling of varieties of handloom products (Marketing Hub/Hat) under a single roof. Such market complexes will not only help the weavers and artisans to sell their products at reasonable prices by dispensing with middlemen but will also help them know the market trend for handloom products for future improvement of products. This will also facilitate the buyers to choose their favourite products under one roof which in turn will enhance volume of sale of handloom products

in the state. Brand quality of handloom will also be commercially exploited to the extent possible.

Private sector entrepreneurs will also be given special assistance to set up units for production of value added fabrics. Similarly area specific and special handloom promotion schemes in private as well as in PPP mode will also be taken up by the department.

SUBSIDISED YARNS

One of the key gaps in the sector has been non availability of raw materials, mainly yarns. Although Assam contributes largely to the production of eri and muga silk most of these are exported raw, as yarn production facility is limited with only two small scale silk yarn mills in the state. Both acrylic and cotton yarns are procured from outside the state. Mulberry yarns, which is mostly used for silk dresses are also brought from outside the state, mostly from Karnataka. The result is high cost of all kinds of yarns and hence of the hand woven cloths. This in turn makes handloom production less viable and less profitable. To tide over the situation, 29 Yarn Banks have been set up in the district head quarters of the state where yarns of all varieties are supplied at a subsidised rate. More such Yarn Banks may be set up at or near important handloom clusters in future and the state Govt. will pursue the policy of providing yarns at subsidised rates to the weavers of up to 20% below the whole sale price at source through such Yarn Banks. It is expected that such action will greatly help the weavers in fighting the onslaught of power loom products. The state Government will also take steps to give financial and other help to mitigate the small weavers of the tax burden under the new GST regime.

EXPLORATION OF OTHER RAW MATERIALS

Assam produces about 770 thousand bales of Jute every year which indicates its great potential in Jute Textiles. Very little of the jute produced is utilized in the state and most of the harvest is exported to other states of the country. These can be utilized within the state profitably.

The soil and climatic condition of the state is extremely good for growing the other most versatile fibre RAMIE. This silky fibre can be used for production of exceptionally good quality fabric and can be blended with other fibres like cotton, Eri & Muga silk, polyester, acrylic fibre etc. The great tensile strength of the fibre is an another important feature of the fibre which makes it suitable for making strong ropes also. The Ramie Research Station at Sarbhog in Assam has standardised extraction of Ramie fibre from the plant.

Bamboo is found in abundance in all parts of the state. The Assamese society cannot live without bamboo and grows it in every household. The forests of Assam is full of this important plant. The method of extraction of fibre from bamboo has already been standardised in some of the countries like China. The technology is not available in our country and can therefore be imported from outside the country to utilize this huge untapped resource.

The state Government will take measures to explore the possibility of using these raw materials for production of yarns for benefit of both the growers and users as well as the state economy.

SOCIAL SECURITY MEASURES

Comprehensive welfare measures for the weavers and artisans will be taken up in close cooperation with the central Govt. for better working environment and social security of the weavers and artisans. The existing Life Insurance such as Bunkar Bima Yojana and health insurance

schemes will be continued with the financial assistance of the central Govt. Benefit of other social security schemes, as per admissibility, will also be made available to the weavers. New welfare schemes may also be designed for their benefit besides reorienting HRD strategy and social security policy.

OTHER MEASURES

- The State Govt. will continue to accord highest priority for this high potential sector, which can provide sustained employment to the weavers and nurture their skill & craftsmanship. The strategy will focus on the weaver to get continuous work and fair wage.
- Weavers will be organized into co-operative societies and Self-help Groups (SHG) and it will be ensured that maximum number of weavers are covered thus. Institutional credit will be made available to these groups and societies. These groups will be encouraged to undertake weaving activity with modern designs including use of CAD.
- Strengthening of the physical and social infrastructure in handloom clusters will get priority for improvement of their operational efficiency.
- Common Facility Centres will be set up for environment friendly dyeing, testing, sourcing market information and for buyer seller interaction
- Measures will be initiated under intellectual property rights (IPRs)/Geographical property rights to safeguard the textile design and processes native to the State.
- The Public will be motivated to patronise handloom cloth and the weavers to produce the product as per the taste of the modern market through various publicity measures. The artisans will also be motivated to take up artistic weaving profession and feel proud to work in the industry.

- The department will try to secure market for certain handloom items through meeting clothing (livery) requirements of Government Departments and State and Central Public Sector Undertakings.