

'All handicrafts should get GI tags to protect identity'

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The fabric of India needs to be protected, said Rajni Kant, director, Human Welfare Association, Varanasi, while advocating legal protection for handlooms and handicrafts.

"Bachega hi nahi to badhega kaise (If we fail to save it, how will we ensure its growth)," said Kant, a Padma Shri awardee, while speaking about the fabric of Purvanchal at The Times of India Destination Uttar Pradesh Conclave.

"There is a need for legal identity and protection for our handlooms and handicrafts be it terracotta of Gorakhpur, Banarasi saree or carpet of Bhadohi. It is not only about our handloom industry but also cultural heritage," he said.

"Legal protection is must as it is related to job opportunities to crores of people in the country through entrepreneurship and startups," said Kant.

He said writers, scientists, singers and other artists get patents, copyrights and trademarks to safeguard their work since it's their individual property, but what about the community properties like chikankari of Lucknow, terracotta work of Gorakhpur and others? If it is not safeguarded both the artisan and the artwork will disappear with time.

One example of such lost handicrafts is the Jamdani work of Akbarpur. "Jamdani fabric was popular among people but now you won't find a single family who is into it. It happened because we failed to preserve and protect it," he added.

Kant said all handicrafts should get a geographical indication (GI) tags so that there is no imitation of the artwork and the authenticity of the handwork is maintained. Also, steps to revive lost handicrafts should be taken, he added.

Fashion designer Rina Dhaka spoke about popularizing khadi through various platforms: be it fashion shows or Bollywood. "We need to bring khadi to the mainstream in our daily lives and not limit it to special days. A push to the use of khadi in styling should be given as once khadi is worn by a top model or a Bollywood star, it is bound to be followed by the younger generation. This is the way to bring the new generation closer to our own fabric."