

'Bridge income gap to boost chikankari trade'

Dist Admin To Chalk Out Action Plan

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Lucknow: The chikankari sector and artisans involved in it are marred by wage disparity, information asymmetry, skill gaps, inaccessibility to e-commerce and digital marketing, and income insecurity stemming from the seasonal nature of livelihood.

These are a few of the myriad challenges faced by chikankari workers that have been highlighted in a report

IIM-INDORE REPORT

of the Indian Institute of Management-Indore (IIM-Indore) unveiled by district magistrate Surya Pal Gangwar on Saturday. The comprehensive report on strategies to strengthen chikankari and increase skills and income of artisans under the One District One Product (ODOP) scheme further entails holistic suggestions, such as setting up common facilitation centres (CFCs) and state-level federation of artists, etc., for augmenting a new era in chikankari trade. "The dis-



KEY SUGGESTIONS

- Set up common facilitation centres to organise artisans to earn better livelihood
- State-level federation will coordinate with CFCs to collect raw material requirements on monthly basis, allocate type of apparels to be made in view of market demand
- Regular market research required to inform artisans about latest trends
- SoPs for contractors
- Take help of e-commerce to increase reach and sales

trict administration is now working on devising an action plan on the basis of the findings that has clear time-bound milestones," said Gangwar

Five months ago, IIM-Indore, led by its director Prof Himanshu Rai, signed an MoU with the district administration to identify the challenges associated with chikankari. Rai and his two other associates — Prof Bhavani Shankar and Naveen Krishna Rai — started the study in July and surveyed over 280 artisans and numerous firms and factories.

One of the primary challenges discovered in the study is unpredictability and income insecurity associated with the trade. According to the study, over 80% of the workers are engaged in less than five months of chikankari work. Only 1% of the artists

found work throughout the year.

Study also revealed that chikankari fetches less than Rs 40,000 per annum for over 70% of the artists.

"Artists are crippled by information asymmetry and skill gap even as 40% of them have expressed their willingness to gravitate to e-commerce for a better price. Besides, the absence of standardization of product and quality assurance arrests their fortunes from making the most of e-commerce," said Prof Himanshu Rai.

Ranking the support in descending order of priority for the artisans, the study reveals that regular work, timely payment reduced wage disparity, skill development, and access to e-commerce are key areas where artists are in dire need of government support and handholding.