

National Handloom Day Celebrated at IIT Mandi

The National Handloom Day was celebrated at IIT Mandi campus on Aug 5, 2016. The chief guest was Prof. Timothy. A. Gonsalves, Director, IIT Mandi and the Special Guest was the Pradhan of Kamand Panchayat, Smt. Reeta Devi.

The main aim to observe the National Handloom Day was to spread awareness among the residents in and around campus, especially the youth. Apart from campus residents, students, faculty and staff, women and men of the nearby panchayats like Kamand, Katindi, Kataula and Navlaya were also invited. There was a good turnout and participation by all.

The programme began with a welcome address by Mr. Pritam Singh (Deputy Directory, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting). This was followed by an insightful talk on Himachal handlooms and its under-tapped commercial value by Mr. O. P. Malhotra, a Shilp Guru awardee and M.D. of Krishna Wools in Mandi. He emphasised the potential of Himachali jackets to attain the kind of popularity and value of Scottish tweed jackets and urged the local population to take to the art of weaving again.

Our very own EWOK team members Urmila Thakur and Sandhya Menon then walked the audience down a historical lane of the Kamand valley handloom culture that was popular with earlier generations. However these practices are soon dying out due to changing preferences for shinier synthetic products, despite being less effective. They strongly suggested the need for innovation to allow these valuable traditions to live on, maybe in new forms.

During the Chief Guest's address, Prof. Gonsalves reminded the packed auditorium of the journey of handloom in India starting with the ideal of 'self-reliance' by Mahatma Gandhi. He talked of IIT Mandi's involvement in working with the neighboring villages in devising solutions to improve current conditions. Especially programs like ISTP and EWOK included initiatives to encourage local handloom and handicrafts. In his closing statement, he encouraged everybody, especially the young students, to reflect on the meaning of the ideal of 'self-reliance' in today's context.

The programme was not all speeches. There was delightful infotainment by Amar Jyoti Dance & Song Group from Bilaspur as they presented folk songs, dance and drama on the theme of adopting 'swadeshi' goods.

A quiz on handlooms was conducted for the students and prizes were bagged by Mayuresh Gupta & Shashi Mohan in the first place, Namrata Thakur & Harshita Seth in the second place, and Mahima & Priya in the third place. A heartfelt vote of thanks was delivered by Dean (Students) Dr. Suman Kalyan Pal.



Audiences during the event



Dance performance by Amarjyoti group



Honouring ceremony by Prof. Timothy A. Gonsalves, Director