

Textile ministry declares steps for welfare of Scheduled Caste workers

The textile ministry on Wednesday announced a raft of measures for the welfare of weavers, artisans, jute and sericulture workers, and entrepreneurs belonging to the Scheduled Caste (SC) category, and earmarked a budget allocation of Rs 167.5 crore for this purpose for 2016-17.

The ministry has also decided to offer group insurance scheme to powerloom workers free of cost and will bear the maximum financial burden of such a scheme. The government will bear the weaver's share of Rs 80 completely, taking its own share to Rs 370 per weaver, out of the total premium of Rs 470 per weaver. The remaining Rs 100 per weaver will continue to be paid from the Social Security Fund of LIC.

The weavers belonging to the SC category will get higher subsidy to upgrade for powerloom under the modified scheme. The Central government will provide financial assistance to the extent of 75% of the cost of upgrade, subject to a subsidy cap of Rs 60,000 per loom, for attachment with rapier kit. The new scheme came into effect from April 1, 2016.

The allocation for the welfare of the SC category in the handloom sector has also been raised to `40 crore for the current fiscal, compared to Rs 16.38 crore a year before.

Similarly, in handicrafts, the budget outlay for the welfare of SC category artisans has been increased from Rs 14.6 crore in 2015-16 to Rs 43 crore for the current fiscal.

For imparting skills to the SC workers, the National Jute Manufacturers Corporation (NJMC) has decided to train about 75% of its total manpower from the SC category. A scheme for housing will soon be formulated for SC workers in jute mills, in which the government could offer 50% subsidy.

In the silk sector, a special scheme covering all important beneficiary-oriented activities across the silk production chain has been prepared for SC beneficiaries, with an allocation of Rs 24 crore.

The scheme will cover around 1,000 SC families in the states of Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, J&K, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh.