

# High level EPCH and IEML delegation visits Raipur, deliberates on strengthening and promoting Indian handicrafts from Chhattisgarh through strategic interventions

**24th January 2026:** A high-level delegation of EPCH and IEML, led by Dr. Rakesh Kumar, Director General, in the role of Chief Mentor, EPCH and Chairman, IEML, along with Dr. Neeraj Khanna, Chairman, EPCH, and Mr. Avdhesh Agarwal, Chief Convenor, EPCH, met the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh, Shri Vishnu Deo Sai, on the occasion of the Groundbreaking Ceremony (Bhoomi Pujan) of the Raipur International Exhibition Centre and Trade Mart, Raipur, Chhattisgarh.

The ceremony was also graced by Chhattisgarh's Minister for Tourism, Culture and Religious Trusts (Religious Endowments), Shri Rajesh Agarwal; Shri Tarun Rathi, State Minister of the Government of Uttar Pradesh; Shri Brijmohan Agrawal, Hon'ble Member of Parliament from the Raipur Lok Sabha constituency; and other distinguished cabinet ministers of the state



*Dr. Rakesh Kumar, Director General, in the role of Chief Mentor, EPCH and Chairman, IEML; Dr. Neeraj Khanna, Chairman, EPCH; Mr. Avdhesh Agarwal, Chief Convenor, EPCH, at the Raipur International Exhibition Centre and Trade Mart's Bhoomi Pujan, graced by the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh, Shri Vishnu Deo Sai; Shri Tarun Rathi, State Minister of the Government of Uttar Pradesh; Chhattisgarh's Minister for Tourism, Culture and Religious Trusts (Religious Endowments), Shri Rajesh Agarwal; and Hon'ble Member of Parliament from the Raipur Lok Sabha constituency, Shri Brijmohan Agrawal.*



*Dr. Rakesh Kumar, Director General, in the role of Chief Mentor, EPCH and Chairman, IEML; Dr. Neeraj Khanna, Chairman, EPCH; Mr. Avdhesh Agarwal, Chief Convenor, EPCH, in a focused meeting with Chhattisgarh's Minister for Tourism, Culture and Religious Trusts (Religious Endowments), Shri Rajesh Agarwal*

During the interaction, the EPCH and IEML delegation deliberated on strengthening and promoting Indian handicrafts from Chhattisgarh through strategic interventions. Key focus areas included the development of an Industrial Park, a dedicated Raipur Film City, and a specialized Textiles Park under the Ministry of Textiles, aimed at enhancing infrastructure, value addition and market access for artisans and craft clusters of the state.

class international handicrafts fair in Chhattisgarh, leveraging the newly developed Raipur International Exhibition Centre.

The Hon'ble Minister expressed keen interest in these initiatives and reaffirmed the state government's commitment to promoting Chhattisgarh's rich cultural heritage and artisanal crafts on the global platform.

On the same day, Dr. Rakesh Kumar, Director General, in the role of Chief Mentor, EPCH and Chairman, IEML; Dr. Neeraj Khanna, Chairman, EPCH; Mr. Avdhesh Agarwal, Chief Convenor, EPCH, met with Smt. Salini Singh Rajput, Chairman, Chhattisgarh Handicrafts Development Board, with the shared objective of shaping a more promising and sustainable future for the artisans of the state.

The interaction focused on empowering primary producers of Chhattisgarh's rich tribal crafts and textiles by forging stronger linkages between traditional heritage and global markets. Emphasis was laid on improving market access, capacity building and integration with international sourcing platforms, thereby ensuring that the skilled artisans who uphold the state's vibrant cultural legacy receive due economic recognition and meaningful business growth.

The delegation also called on Ms. Lata Usendi, National Vice President of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and MLA for Kondagaon, in Raipur. She previously served as the Minister of Women and Child Development in Chhattisgarh.

The discussion focused on a future strategy to develop and promote tribal handicrafts from Chhattisgarh and its neighbouring regions. Ms. Usendi's leadership in this initiative is significant due to her deep ties to the region's tribal heartland.



*Dr. Rakesh Kumar, Director General, in the role of Chief Mentor, EPCH and Chairman, IEML; Dr. Neeraj Khanna, Chairman, EPCH; Mr. Avdhesh Agarwal, Chief Convenor, EPCH, in a discussion with Ms. Lata Usendi, National Vice President of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and MLA for Kondagaon, in Raipur, towards a future strategy to develop and promote tribal handicrafts from Chhattisgarh and its neighbouring regions*

The Chhattisgarh state government has allocated significant funds in the 2025-26 budget for tribal welfare and rural connectivity through schemes like PM-JANMAN, which supports the infrastructure needed for tribal artisans to reach wider markets. Ms. Lata Usendi is also the Vice President of Bastar Development Board. The strategy discussed aligns with broader goals of building resilient infrastructure for artisans and fostering sustainable development through international market linkages.

*The EPCH and IEML delegation at a showroom of the Bastar Development Board*

