



CHAIRMAN'S SPEECH

Speech by **Mr. Sudhir Sekhri**, Chairman, AEPC
at **46th AEPC ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

on

30th December 2025, Through Video Conferencing



Dear Colleagues,

On behalf of the Executive Committee of the Apparel Export Promotion Council and on my personal behalf, I extend a very warm welcome to all of you at this 46th Annual General Meeting of the Council. The Notice for convening this meeting, the Annual Report for the financial year ending 31st March 2025, along with the Annual Audited Accounts and Auditors' Report, are already with you. With your permission, I take them as read.

Friends, India's journey in global exports has been marked by resilience and growth. India's total merchandise exports were US\$ 437.7 billion in 2024-25, placing India at 16th place in total world merchandise exports in comparison to 19th in 2014. Talking specifically about the Apparel Industry, I am happy to report that in 2024-25 RMG exports touched 15.9 billion USD despite global headwinds and geo-political challenges.

This year we have started on a positive note. Apparel exports have demonstrated extraordinary resilience despite steep tariff imposed by USA, which happens to be the larger consumer of Indian Apparel. Seen from that standpoint, growth of about 2.3% during the first eight months (April to November 2025-26), the RMG exports is nothing less than commendable.

The global trade environment is undergoing rapid change, with evolving tariff regimes, shifting consumer preferences, and supply chain realignments. Amidst these shifts, India's apparel sector has demonstrated its inherent strength, adaptability, and forward-looking spirit.

In the midst of "Trump Tariff" shocks our exporters have demonstrated exemplary resilience. Indian apparel exporters have responded with patience by continuing to service existing export orders despite suffering losses. While the tariff measures have created temporary disruptions, the sector has responded with agility—by recalibrating sourcing strategies, strengthening backward linkages, and exploring new market avenues across Latin America, Africa, and East Asia.

At the same time, India's expanding network of Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) is emerging as a cornerstone of our market diversification strategy. The operationalization of the India–EFTA Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement, the conclusion of the India–UK FTA and India-



Oman FTA, the ongoing FTA negotiations with New Zealand, Chile, Peru and the advanced stage of negotiations with the European Union together promise preferential or zero-duty access to their advanced economies/ markets. These trade partnerships are expected to offset existing tariff disadvantages, restore competitive parity with countries that already enjoy preferential market access, and create new growth opportunities for the Indian apparel sector to expand its global footprint.

The Government decision to revise and broaden the scope of Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme for Textiles is a welcome move. The inclusion of 8 new HSN codes for MMF Apparel and 9 new HSN codes for MMF Fabrics, along with greater flexibility for existing companies to set up project units, marks a forward-looking step towards making India a global leader in man-made fibre-based textiles and technical textiles. The reduction in minimum investment thresholds will further democratize the scheme, encouraging wider participation from small and medium enterprises.

AEPC has been working proactively on a growth strategy aimed at realizing USD 40 billion in apparel exports by 2030. This includes strengthening our global presence, enhancing product capabilities, deepening buyer engagement, and promoting technology-driven and sustainable practices.

Friends, as you are aware, the successful organization of Bharat Tex 2025 was a proud moment for the entire textile value chain. It demonstrated India's capability to host global-scale events and to emerge as a major force in the textile and apparel world. Encouraged by this success, the third edition of Bharat Tex will be held from 14–17 July 2026 at Bharat Mandapam covering the entire textile value chain from fibre to fashion. This edition promises larger participation, richer content, and even greater business opportunities. I request all members to actively participate and contribute to making Bharat Tex 2026 another resounding success.

I am also pleased to share that the India International Garment Fair (IIGF) continues to grow in scale and relevance. This year's edition witnessed strong buyer turnout, participation from a diverse range of exporters, and an inspiring showcase of India's capabilities in womenswear, menswear, kidswear, accessories, knitwear, and sustainable garments.



During FY 2024–25, AEPC has also participated in several major global exhibitions and sourcing events across Spain, Tokyo, Las Vegas, Melbourne, Poland, Saudi Arabia and other important markets. These events help Indian exporters strengthen buyer engagement, gain visibility, and tap new opportunities in emerging markets.

The global textile and apparel value chain is undergoing rapid digital transformation. Technologies such as AI-driven demand forecasting, automated cutting and sewing systems, virtual sampling, 3D design, and digital supply-chain visibility are becoming essential for retaining competitiveness. AEPC is working on initiatives to familiarize exporters with these emerging tools. I strongly believe that embracing digitalization will not only improve speed-to-market but also significantly enhance compliance, quality, and cost-efficiency for our member exporters.

Sustainability is no longer a choice—it is a market expectation. AEPC is working on a long-term “Green Apparel India” roadmap aimed at helping Indian exporters transition toward low-carbon, resource-efficient, and circular manufacturing. This includes promoting renewable energy, water-efficient technologies, waste reduction systems, and traceability solutions that meet global ESG expectations. With buyers increasingly prioritizing climate-friendly sourcing, I firmly believe that India has the potential to emerge as the global hub for sustainable and responsible apparel manufacturing.

In an increasingly competitive market, brand perception plays a critical role. AEPC is working on plans to strengthen Brand India Apparel globally through digital campaigns, targeted buyer outreach, curated B2B events, and enhanced India Pavilions at major international exhibitions. Our aim is to highlight India's strengths in design, sustainability, craftsmanship, and scale, and position the country not just as a manufacturing hub but as a value-creating textile and apparel partner for global brands.

Acknowledgements

I place on record my sincere gratitude to the Hon'ble Vice President of India, Shri C. P. Radhakrishnan ji, for gracing the AEPC export award function with his esteemed presence on 20th December 2025 at New Delhi. His participation greatly enhanced the stature of the event and was



a source of inspiration and encouragement for the apparel export fraternity.

I express my sincere gratitude to Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi ji, Hon'ble Minister of Textiles Shri Giriraj Singh ji, Hon'ble Minister of Commerce & Industry Shri Piyush Goyal ji, Hon'ble Minister of Finance Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman ji, Hon'ble Ministers of State Shri Pabitra Margherita ji and Shri Jitin Prasada ji, RBI Governor Shri Sanjay Malhotra, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister of India Shri Shaktikanta Das, Shri Rajesh Agarwal, Secretary, Department of Commerce, Ministry of Commerce & Industry and Smt. Neelam Shami Rao, Secretary Ministry of Textiles for leading from the front and listening to our needs and announcing measures.

My heartfelt thanks to all senior officials including Shri Rohit Kansal, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Textiles, Shri Asit Gopal, AS&FA, Ministry of Textiles, Shri A. Bipin Menon, Trade Advisor, Ministry of Textiles, Smt. M. Beena (IAS), Textile Commissioner, Smt. Padmini Singla, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Textiles, Shri Rajinder Kumar, Economic Advisor, and other senior officials of the Government, who extended their continuous support in the furtherance of Apparel exports from India.

I also wish to thank officials from DGFT, NITI Aayog, CBIC, Textiles Committee, DRI/DGARM, and various government bodies for their cooperation and facilitation of our industry.

My sincere thanks to Dr. A.Sakthivel, Vice Chairman, the Chairmen of all Sub-Committees i.e Shri Naren Goenka, Chairman, Advisory Sub-committee, Shri Premal H Udani, Chairman, Export Promotion Committee, Shri H K L Magu, Chairman, Finance & Budget Sub-committee, Shri Lalit Thukral, Incharge (Regional Committee, Northern Region), Shri Ashok Rajani, Incharge (Regional Committee, Western Region) Shri Anil Buchasia, Incharge (Regional Committee, Eastern Region), Shri R Ramu, Incharge (Regional Committee, Southern Region), Shri Rakesh Vaid, Chairman, Apparel House Management Sub-committee & Sr, Vice Chairman ATDC, Executive Committee Members, Co-opted Members, and Permanent & Special Invitees for their continued guidance and support.



I also place on record my sincere appreciation to the esteemed industry associations—GEMA, TEA, GEAR, and CMAI—for their steadfast support, valuable cooperation, and continued partnership in ensuring the successful organization of IGFA.

I extend my gratitude to the press and media for highlighting industry concerns and publishing AEPC's recommendations from time to time.

My special appreciation goes to Shri Mithileshwar Thakur, Secretary General, AEPC, Shri Indra Vikram Singh, Deputy Secretary General, Senior Director, Directors, Additional Directors, General Managers, Company Secretary and the entire AEPC, IGFA & ATDC staff for their dedicated service and hard work.

As we approach the New Year, I take this opportunity to extend my warmest greetings and best wishes for a happy, healthy, and prosperous New Year to all our members, exporters, buyers, partners, and stakeholders. May the coming year bring renewed opportunities, sustained growth, and collective success for the Indian apparel industry.

Best Wishes,

Sudhir Sekhri
Chairman, AEPC



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