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SPECIAL
PASHMINA

INTERVIEW
SECRETARY, MoCS on
PASHMINA EXPORT

FEATURE
CHYANGRA
PASHMINA LOGO

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PREFACE

Supporting Nepal's Implementation of its WTO Commitments and the Enhanced Integrated Framework is a joint initiative of the Government of Nepal and the Federal Republic of Germany, implemented by the Nepal Ministry of Commerce and Supplies and Deutsche Gesellschaft fur Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH. The objective of the project is to improve the capacities of the Nepalese Government to enhance the business environment by strategically using and implementing WTO commitments and the Enhanced Integrated Framework.

In 2004 Nepal became the 147th member of the World Trade Organization. To that effect, GoN and its respective structures are tasked with increasingly mobilizing Aid for Trade (AfT) and partially trade-related technical assistance (TRTA) to be provided by multilateral and bilateral donors, and with managing and coordinating such activities effectively and efficiently. To facilitate this, in 2010 Nepal Trade Integration Strategy (NTIS) was developed jointly by the Ministry of Commerce and Supplies (MoCS), GoN together with international and bilateral development partners. The NTIS charts a possible course for the development of Nepal's export sector over the next five years and is a central building bloc in the GoN's efforts to coordinate and manage TRTA / AfT within the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF).

This publication will give an overview of one of the prioritised sectors amongst the 19 sectors of the NTIS – Pashmina, as it plays a vital role in generating revenue, employment and having a high social impact. With the registration of the Chyangra Pashmina logo and setting up of a Quality Testing Laboratory, the Industry is all set to reclaim its former image of being among the highest quality products of Nepal. Nepal Trade has tried to feature some of the important aspects of this industry – its rich history, policies, challenges faced and imminent opportunities.

We hope you will find this issue as insightful and helpful as the previous issues. For updates from this sector as well as all other 19 products and services that have been identified as "export potential sectors" in the NTIS 2010, please visit www.nepaltrade.org and request a username and password, if it applies to you.

We are looking forward to your feedback and wish you a happy and insightful reading!

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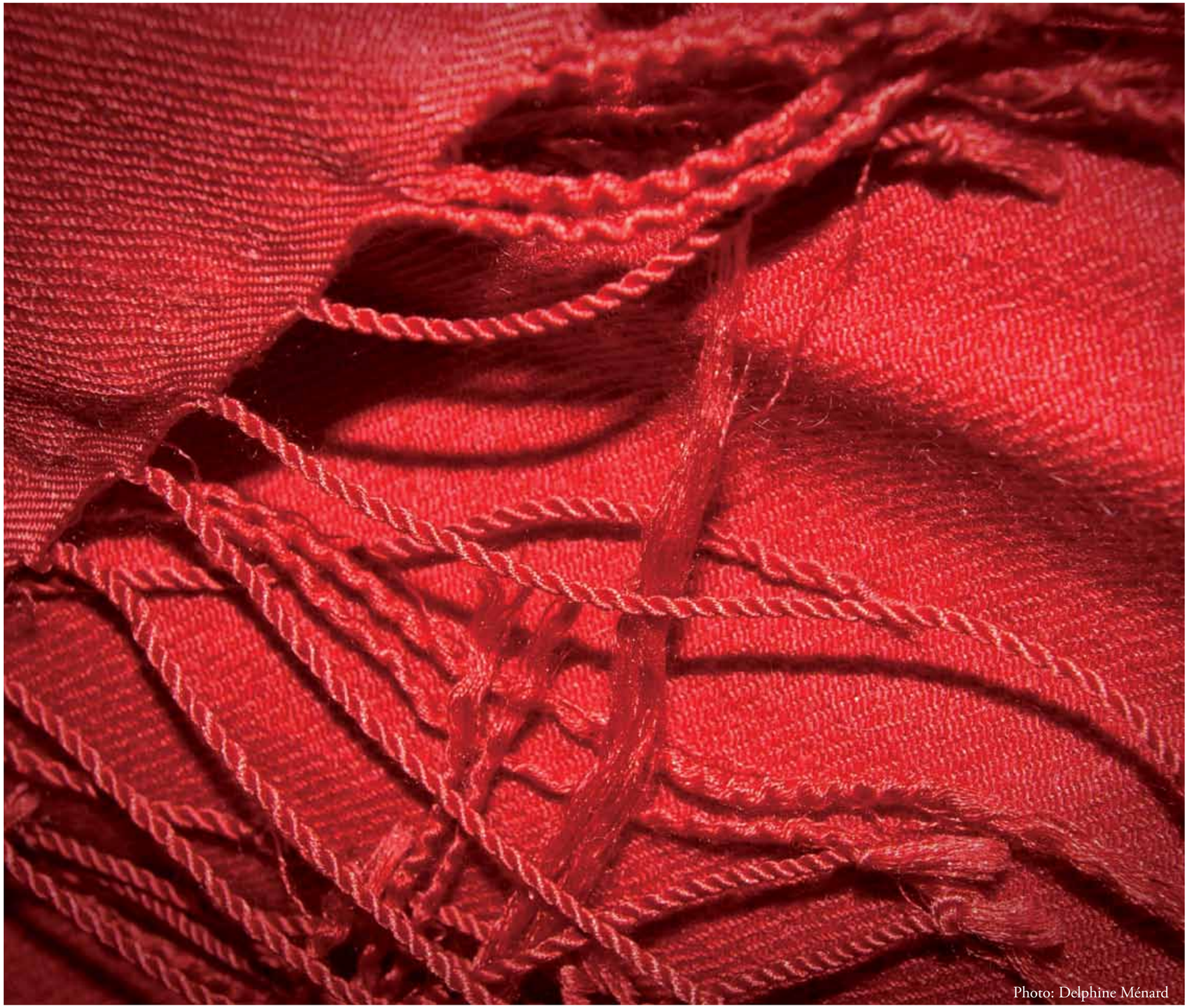


Photo: Delphine Ménard

PASHMINA IN BRIEF

Pashmina is considered to be one of the most precious and natural fibres on earth.

Nepal is widely known for its finely woven indigenous and unique pashmina products.

Pashmina is derived from the Persian word 'Pashmn' which means wool. It is a soft, weightless and natural fibre extracted from the special breed of goat, Capra Hircus locally known as Chyangra.

The mountain goats "Chyangra" are found in the high Himalayan belts of Nepal. Due to the climatic conditions being extremely harsh and cold, these mountain goats have been gifted with nature's unique thin short inner coat of hair which is the best natural insulation in the world.

NEPAL'S SECRETARY OF MOCS ON PASHMINA

Nepal Trade talked to the Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce and Supplies (MoCS) Mr. Lal Mani Joshi on the Pashmina Industry of Nepal.

Why is pashmina from Nepal so famous in the world?

The world's most revered and luxury fibre 'Pashmina', from the native Himalayan goat 'Chyangra' of Nepal has been popular for centuries among royal and noble dynasties, as the finest and the most luxurious piece of gift for more than a thousand years, because of the soft and warm wool extricated from the inner body of the mountain goat called Chyangra which is found in the Himalayan belt of 3000 meters above sea level in Nepal.

In fact pashmina from Nepal has become popular in Europe, USA, Japan and all over the world and is sold in boutiques from Manhattan to Paris.

Do you think pashmina is also a driving force of Nepal's economy?

I would say, yes! Besides the above rosy picture of pashmina, we have favourable climatic conditions for raw material production, rampant workers available, good potential of up scaling as there are ample number of designers, and there are large numbers of looms and equipment for crafting final product. In addition, there is great potential of income generation for those poor farmers in the mountains. If properly promoted and harnessed for export, we can reduce the poverty in the high mountain. Likewise, Nepal can earn foreign currency due to the export of the value added products of pashmina.

Although pashmina has great export potential, there has been a sharp decline in exports recently. Why?

Nepal's pashmina faced a severe setback in the international market due to the imitation of pashmina wool in the neighbouring countries by factory produced cheap fibres. In fact, after 2000, for almost a decade, pashmina went from being a luxury product associated with royalty to a low quality commodity. Conversely, consumers associated pashmina with the imitation, and low-quality product which they weren't prepared to pay for the more expensive genuine product. As a result, pashmina export plunged to $ 18 million in 2010 from $ 103 million in 2000.

What was the Government of Nepal's (GoN) endeavour to recover the once tainted image of 'Nepal pashmina'?

The GoN, together with pashmina producers made a battle plan to recover the tainted image of Nepal pashmina by registering the new trademark, 'Chyangra Pashmina', for Nepal's particular wool, in major export destinations of Western countries.

The Ministry of Commerce and Supplies (MoCS), GoN, played an important role in registering the trademark. The MoCS, after receiving a proposal from the Nepal Pashmina Industries Association (NPIA), along with the decision from Export Promotion and Trade Facilitation Working Group of Nepal Business Forum, committed to provide Nepalese rupees 8.6 million, for the registration process of 'Chyangra Pashmina' in other countries.

So far, 'Chyangra Pashmina' has been registered in 41 countries till date. The GoN has set up a laboratory in Kathmandu to prove their quality, whereas, exporters have marked 'Chyangra Pashmina' logo to avoid imitations of 'Nepal Pashmina'. After branding the pashmina as 'Chyangra Pashmina', we saw a remarkable export growth to $37.95 million from 2010/11 from $25.83 million in 2009/10.

This shows that changing the brand from 'Nepal Pashmina' to 'Chyangra Pashmina' proved to be magic a stick for the pashmina Industry in Nepal. Do you mean, there're no hurdles at all in this sector?

'I would say, No'. Indeed, changing brand has a remarkable effect as evident from export data of Rashtra Bank; however, this sector is not free from hurdles.

Needless to say, there is abundant production of Chyangra wool in the country. Nevertheless, due to the lack of processing plants, local wool is exported at low price while expensive raw materials are being imported. The wool can fulfil 40 per cent of the requirement for raw material if a processing plant is established, as per a survey carried out by the International Trade Centre/WTO in fiscal 2007.

Next, we have not been able to exploit the potential market for Nepali pashmina due to inadequate publicity of the 'Chyangra Pashmina' the collective trademark, which assures buyers of the product's quality.

Was there any initiative by GoN to access to the biggest market like United States?

Nepal has been exporting handicraft items, herbs, readymade garments, pashmina and woollen carpets to the USA which is the second largest export market for Nepal.

During the second joint council meeting of the bilateral trade treaty, Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA), signed on April 17, 2011, the GoN had requested the US government to settle the trade related issues immediately. In addition, GoN requested the US government for preferential treatment for 11 products, including pashmina and readymade garments. MoCS urged on the Generalized System of Preference (GSP) facility for Nepali products during the second TIFA meeting.

Photo: Himadri Palikhe

The US government is positive to promote investment between the two countries. US investment in Nepal during Nepal Investment Year 2012-13 and grant market access for Nepali pashmina and readymade garments in the US.

What is the future plan of the government to boost the pashmina sector in Nepal?

The GoN has placed pashmina at the forefront of priority, indicating it as one among the 19 sectors, identified in Nepal Trade Integration Strategy (NTIS-2010). Recently, the GoN has received $1.24 million from International Trade Centre (ITC), to further implement and support 'Chyangra Pashmina' producers, enhance international marketing and brand image development, and institutional support for Nepal Pashmina Industries Association (NPIA). The funding was disbursed by the World Trade Organization (WTO) under the Tier 2 funding of its Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF).

In addition, the GoN is helping the process registering the 'Chyangra Pashmina' brand in Russia, United Arab Emirates (Dubai), China, India, South Africa, Thailand, Brazil, Taiwan. Further, Nepal Bureau of Standards and Metrology (NBSM), GoN, grants the authenticity of the product on quality, softness and natural fibres through its testing facility. ■

Rup Kumar B.K, GIZ

PASHMINA PROMOTION IN NEPAL: A POLICY PERSPECTIVE

The Government of Nepal's (GoN) endeavor of including Pashmina in the Trade Policy 2009 under the special focus area and in the Nepal Trade Integration Strategy (NTIS) 2010 as and one of the export potential sectors has paid off by the recent rise in export.

The Government of Nepal (GoN) has identified pashmina as one of the sectors having high social and economic impact, poverty reduction, employment and the potential to reduce poverty and create employment. Pashmina, after gaining importance in the GoN's trade strategy, NTIS-2010, has drawn attention among the public and the private sector as well as in the donor community to invest and support more, so as to make this sector competitive for export. There is no separate pashmina policy as such in Nepal; however, the GoN supports pashmina through various policies and is placed under the Special Focus Area in the Trade Policy-2009.

The pashmina industry in Nepal, due to its value addition to fashion apparels, is regarded ideal for export rather than for domestic consumption. However, it has been addressed as a handicraft product in domestic acts/laws such as the Industrial Enterprise Act 1992 and Intellectual Property Protection Act 1992. It has been addressed in several bi and multilateral trade treaties and agreements.

Pashmina, as a cottage industry shall not be subject to sales tax, excise duty and income tax, as facilities and concessions have been given in the Industrial Enterprise Act, 1992. The cottage industries are not liable to obey provisions of 'Competition Promotion and Market Protection Act, 2063 (2007)', for the promotion of competition and the protection of markets. The act has provided enough space for single competition, bidding, exclusive dealing, market restriction and tied selling except

Photo: Sunil Sharma

'misleading advertisement' for marketing. Besides, the GoN has placed pashmina, along with silk, under a special focus area in the Trade Policy 2009, by giving special provisions, such as:

- The production of raw materials will be encouraged to ensure permanent and long term supply of primary raw materials required to produce pashmina and silk goods.
- Local entrepreneurs will be encouraged through the support in capital and technology as may be necessary for the rearing of Himalayan goats (Chyangra) for producing raw materials.
- Priority will be given to the quality testing and registration of trade marks in major exporting countries to maintain quality standards of the goods produced from pashmina and silk.
- Pilot projects based on cooperatives and improved technology will be implemented in potential rural areas under the supervision and surveillance of technicians for the development of farming of Himalayan goats (Chyangra).
- Exports will be encouraged by facilitating market access through conduct of promotional programs and development of competitive capacity.
- Assistance will be given to develop human resources as may be necessary for production and exports of pashmina and silk.
- Backward and forward linkages of pashmina and silk based products will be developed.
- The design center will be optimally utilized for the diversification of pashmina and silk based production.

Further, pashmina was found to have export potential in the Nepal Trade Competitive Study in 2004. Later, pashmina was included in the NTIS-2010, as one of the 19 priority sectors. Pashmina was analyzed for its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The NTIS-2010 suggests the following actions to be taken so as to boost the sector.

- Initiate Chyangra farming development activities on a pilot project basis at suitable locations to meet at least 20 per cent of the total pashmina yarn requirement.
- Set up pashmina processing plants on cooperative basis at appropriate locations (e.g. Upper Mustang, Mugu, Dolpa or Humla) to encourage poor livestock farmers in remote areas to enter into production.
- Implement a long-term sericulture project for the development of a silk sector in Nepal (pashmina shawls usually contain 30 per cent silk), based on the findings of a recent feasibility study.
- Set up a national institute with appropriate laboratory testing capacity and research and training facilities to provide quality assurance for pashmina and silk materials.
- Undertake afeasibility study to set up a pashmina yarn spinning plant in Nepal.
- Undertake a feasibility study to set up a pashmina knitting sector in Nepal.

Additionally, the GoN has supported the trademark registration process of pashmina in other countries by agreeing to provide $121000, on the basis of installments, to the Nepal Pashmina Industries Association (NPIA).

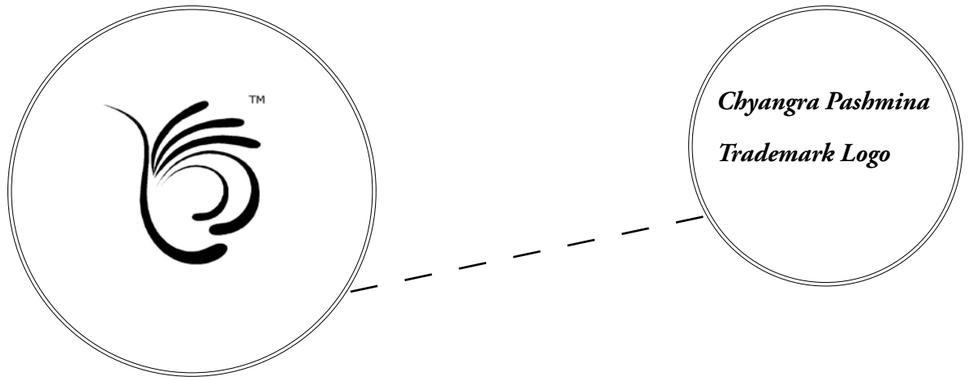
Pashmina, as a handicraft product, has been addressed in some of the bi and multilateral trade agreements too. Especially, handicraft has been addressed in a number of trade agreements of Nepal with other trading partners. According to Trade and Export Promotion Center (TEPC), one of Nepal's trade and transit agreement, 'Trade and Payments Agreements' between the then GoN and the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, signed in April 2, 1976, has listed handicraft, as one of the export items from Nepal to Bangladesh. Likewise, the same agreement has been made with other countries. Similarly, exporters of handicraft products are allowed to fix the price of their products after being reviewed by Handicraft Association then allowed exporting, as agreed under paragraph 82 of the Working Party Report of the World Trade Organization (WTO).

After including Pashmina under the special focus area in theTrade Policy 2009, and enlisting it as one of the export potential sectors in NTIS 2010, GoN's endeavour has been paid off by the recent rise in the export of pashmina over a couple of years. In addition, the GoN's support in re-branding to 'Chyangra Pashmina' has set another milestone for export. Likewise, the GoN has been successful in acquiring a Tier 2 project of $1.2 million under the Enhanced Integrated Framework to be implemented by the International Trade Centre (ITC) which will further improve; a) Supply side capacity, b) international marketing and brand image development, and c) institutional support to NPIA. Therefore, pashmina sector of Nepal is expected to see a brighter avenue of success in the days to come. ■

Rup Kumar BK, GIZ

NEPAL PASHMINA INDUSTRIES ASSOCIATION (NPIA) PROUDLY LAUNCHES THE CHYANGRA PASHMINA LOGO

Overcoming major challenges and taking advantage of opportunites is important for any thriving industry to make a mark at the global level.



Why has Nepal Pashmina Industries Association (NPIA) invested in the 'Chyangra Pashmina' Logo?

In the past, high quality pashmina was synonymous with Nepal. But this has changed in the last couple of years and the word 'pashmina' is now often associated with low value shawls woven out of low quality materials, sold in markets for less than a couple of dollars.

To compete with this, Nepali manufacturers have obliged to use inferior quality materials sourced from neighbouring countries. This has negatively affected Nepal's image as an exporter of quality, genuine pashmina shawls. This loss of reputation has had a negative impact on the Nepalese pashmina export industry.

The ultra-soft wool of the inner coat of the Chyangra goats, which only grows when these special goats are raised high in the isolated Himalayas, has a romantic, unique story for the luxury goods industry.

The success of the pashmina industry in Nepal could help lift many Nepalese out of poverty through empowering and equipping them with the tools to use their unique heritage and traditional knowledge to tap into the global luxury market.

To realise the value of this industry, there are a number of challenges which need to be overcome. The 'Chyangra Pashmina' Logo aims to help us overcome the negative brand reputation for 'pashmina' amongst luxury consumers and provides a basis for a cohesive marketing strategy for the industry.

What does the 'Chyangra Pashmina' Logo mean?

The use of 'Chyangra Pashmina', rather than simply 'pashmina' with an associated logo, supported by an international marketing campaign aims to help restore consumers' confidence in Nepali pashmina.

The logo is a customer's reassurance of quality – it is a guarantee that the product they purchase with the logo is a genuine 'Chyangra Pashmina' product made in Nepal from the luxurious inner wool of the unique Himalayan mountain goat. Its creation involves strict quality standards, environmentally friendly methods and no child labour.

How will NPIA ensure that the logo continues to stand for quality?

In order to be able to use the 'Chyangra Pashmina' Logo, companies must be a member of the NPIA and they must agree to comply with very strict criteria set out in the Code of Conduct. NPIA can provide more information on the Code of Conduct if required.

NPIA will take strong action against any unauthorised use of the logo by third parties. It is critical to the success of the logo that consumers are able to trust that when they find the logo, they will be able to feel the difference of genuine Nepali 'Chyangra Pashmina'.

What steps has NPIA taken to protect the 'Chyangra Pashmina' product from counterfeit products?

NPIA has applied to register the logo as a trademark in many countries around the world. The trademark has already been registered in 41 countries and registration is in process in another 6 countries under the Phase-I program *(refer to the graph on page 13)*. This will provide a strong basis on which to protect the mark and enforce our rights, allowing us to continue to build a strong brand around the 'Chyangra Pashmina' Logo.

"Creating a strong brand does not happen overnight. Companies spend a lot of money developing brands that are instantly recognizable to consumers. Think of the Coca Cola logo for example – any consumer will immediately recognize it and associate it with the quality product of the Coca Cola Company. This is what we are aiming to achieve with the 'Chyangra Pashmina' Logo - that when a consumer sees a product bearing the logo, they have the confidence that this 'Chyangra Pashmina' Product is authentic, is made by the true originators of 'Chyangra Pashmina', with the best quality wool available in Nepal, providing the consumer with a product experience that is unequivocal."

NPIA is very excited to launch this new logo and it encourages customers to look out for it when they are next buying the 'Chyangra Pashmina' product

We have almost successfully completed Part 1 of Phase-I, but we have a long way to go Now we are ready to embark in the next phase, which is the most important – building awareness of the brand. We need to educate consumers as to what the logo means, what the brand stands for and why they need to look for it and buy the genuine 'Chyangra Pashmina' product. Without this education, registration of the logo is not going to result in the best benefits for Nepal.

A major advantage of a successful Phase-II will result in not only developing a great brand for the 'Chyangra Pashmina' industry, but also in promoting Nepal and Nepalese goods which will benefit many other industries in Nepal, including tourism and other Nepalese products such as tea, coffee etc. ■

Vijoy Kumar Dugar
Secretary General
Nepal Pashmina Industries Association (NPIA)

WEAVING A BRIGHTER TOMORROW

Nepal Trade visited various factories interviewing the workers about their work as the faces behind the scene.

Pashmina has come a long way from being a simple hand woven fabric used for warmth by people living in high altitudes to one of the most fashionable apparels that has become an enduring trend internationally. Come winter and the best-dressed shoulders in the world are wearing Nepali pashmina. Nepal's rich geographical condition, with its Himalayan belt has resulted in the growth of the Nepalese pashmina industry, making it a vital part of the country's economy. With high potential for export to different regions in the world, the pashmina sector has grown at a remarkable pace, although in recent years there had been a huge decline in the export trend. In this context, we decided to meet the faces behind the scene. We were able to interview some of these workers who play a vital role in producing quality pashmina from the initial stage of weaving to finishing.

Over more than 15,000 people are directly employed in the pashmina industry in Nepal. Although the exact figure is not determinable, yet the majority of them are women. Most of these workers joined the industry when it was at its peak. "I had little education and no opportunity or connection for other employment therefore I chose this field of work" says one of the workers at a factory. Familial issues also played a major role in having these people join this industry, such as death of the husband who was the sole bread earner in the family. Says Ishwari Lamichhane, "my husband, an ex-army man was working as a security guard for a reputed hotel. His untimely death had me join this industry". Asked about how she came to know about the industry, she responds, "at that time I was working as a domestic helper at the factory owner's house. I had to work harder to earn more to look after my children, who were very young then." Another employee shared that she was told by her mother to join the industry, as her mother was already an employee and the option seemed best.

For most of these workers, working in this sector has been a great opportunity for them. In fact most of them have been working in the same factory for more than ten years. These years have seen them garner a lot of experience and knowledge of the industry. They are the important faces behind the scenes for producing some of the best pashmina products which ranges from a scarf, a wrap or stole to full sized shawl, cardigan sweaters, gloves and beanies. The most popular pashmina fabric is a 70% pashmina/30% silk blend, but 50/50 is also common. The 70/30 is tightly woven, has an elegant sheen and drapes nicely, but is still quite soft and light-weight. While these workers have their job description defined, yet each one of them has knowledge of the others' work and they are adjustable to doing anything, ranging from making a cone to making a tuki to mending, washing, cleaning and finishing. Although they have not received any formal training yet, with the help and advice from their seniors, the newcomers have been able to learn on the job. They seem to be very comfortable in their workspace. "I have enjoyed my ten years of working in this factory. I wouldn't want to leave because I am very comfortable here. I have made good friends through these years" says Prativa Shrestha, who apparently met her husband in the same factory. Twenty-six-year-old Maya Shrestha is proud of the fact that she is able to support her family with her income. "I have been able to look after my family's needs and send my children to good schools. I have been appreciated by many and it makes me feel proud and makes me work harder" says Maya.

While working in the factory has been enjoyable for them, they do recall few instances that have been challenging to them. The years that led to the downfall of the pashmina industry due to imitated works, were difficult, especially with the continuous inflation. Also with the constant load-shedding, the workers had to adjust as per the time schedule to meet the production demand, which meant they were working nights most of the times. However, although the workers have less knowledge about the registration of the trademark, yet they seem to be positive about the long term perspective. "Although I do not know in detail about the logo, yet it seems that it is good for the country, which means it is good for us," opines Suden Maharjan. According to him, the registration of a trademark is a huge step for the pashmina industry as a whole.

Jannu Chudal Sherpa, GIZ

Photo: Rup Kumar B.K

PASHMINA IN THE MAKING

Nepal is widely known for its finely woven indigenous and unique pashmina products.

The mountain goats 'Chyangra' are found in the high Himalayan belts of Nepal. Due to the climatic conditions being extremely harsh and cold, these mountain goats have been gifted with nature's unique thin short inner coat of hair which is the best insulation in the world. They are domesticated by the inhabitants throughout the Himalayan region.

One Chyangra produces 3 ounces of Pashmina per year. This wool,which has a diameter of about 13 microns is collected and woven into Yam using tradional methods. These Yam are then woven into pashmina products like stoles, shawls, scarves, gloves, caps and sweaters. The wool varies in four colours– grey, white, black and cream.

The Pashmina making process is a meticulous process. With the coming of summer, the Himalayan goats shed their warm winter coat. Their underbellies are covered with two different types of wool: 1) The fine soft inner coat which is called pashmina and 2) a thick coarse outer layer. The wool is gathered by the inhabitants, who comb it thoroughly to separate the pashmina from the thicker, less luxuriant wool.

Each fiber is about one sixth the width of a human hair, and one shawl requires about 24 ounces of wool.

Photo: House of Pashmina, Hamburg

The pashmina wool is collected every spring from the Chyangra goat. The soft fine pashmina is then separated from the thick coarse hair. Both the soft pashmina and the thick coarse hair is taken for their further processing

Photos: Jannu Chudal Sherpa
Vidha Pradhan

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1. The raw materials go through the process of warping.

2. It is then formed into 'Tukis', so that it can be fit accordingly in the power loom

3. Weaving is done in a power-loom. The weaving of pashmina products differ according to their nature. Different looms are required to weave different pashmina products.

4. The woven pashmina then goes through the process of mending and in case of sweaters, linking is done.

5. Different types of dyes are used to dye the product.

6. Once the product is dyed then the process of drying takes place.

7. The dried pashmina products undergo the process of fringing and print designing. Because the fringe and design making process is artistic and a delicate process, it takes hours to fringe and design each pashmina shawl or any other pashmina product.

8. The printed pashmina products being dried.

9. The final phase is the process of finishing, where each product is thoroughly checked, ironed and then packaged for the market.

10. Pashmina products on display in a showroom.

Photos: Jannu Chudal Sherpa
Rup Kumar B.K

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EXPORTING CHYANGRA PASHMINA

Although the international trade of Pashmina is strongly regulated, it offers substantial chances for Nepalese producers

Pashmina is widely known for its superior attributes and quality and therefore highly demanded all over the world, especially in the high price markets of the EU (especially France and Germany), Japan and the USA, where consumers are willing to pay high prices for outstanding quality.

According to the Trade and Export Promotion Centre, in the fiscal year of 2000/2001 pashmina exports from Nepal reached their all-time peak with exporting pashmina products worth slightly more than 5 billion NPR. In the fiscal year 2001/2002, the exports plummeted by about 64.85% and were only worth 1.8 billion NPR. The negative trend continued until the fiscal year 2004/2005 with around 1 billion NRP. According to representatives of the sector, the drastic drop of exports can be explained by an increase of cheap, low-quality imitations, which were often labelled as Nepalese pashmina. Nepalese pashmina producers had troubles maintaining their high quality themselves and "black sheep" additionally damaged the image of the pashmina products from Nepal in western markets. All this had a significant lack of trust as consequence and consumers were not willing to pay as much as before for pashmina from Nepal.

With the foundation and establishment of the trademark and logo 'Chyangra Pashmina' by the Nepal Pashmina Industries' Association (NPIA), the Nepalese producers managed to regain some trust of international buyers. The sector slowly recovered from 2004/2005 until 2008/2009, where the value of exports reached 1.8 billion NPR again, growing about 40% from the fiscal year 2007/2008. Prospects are good that the pashmina sector has the potential to reach its old performances again. In 2009/2010 the value of exports sank about 27.6%, but went up 24.2% again to 1.6 billion in 2010/2011, according to data of Nepali Rastra Bank. The numbers of exports in the fiscal year 2011/2012 are promising with an increase of 63.5% in the first half.

Pashmina from Nepal is exported in more than 60 countries, the Chyangra trademark is registered in 41 of them. The high rise of exports shows the success of the sector's export strategy. Still existing bottlenecks for pashmina exports are weak quality control, and nominal productions of domestic raw material, as well as a lack of brand awareness of Nepalese 'Chyangra Pashmina' in the international market. The raw material is exported to China where it is processed into wool and re-imported to Nepal.

In its major export markets, namely the EU, Japan and the USA, Nepal enjoys duty free and quota free market access. Nonetheless, due to strict Rules of Origins and quality issues, Nepal has not been able to utilise these access accordingly. With the introduction of the trademark and logo of 'Chyangra Pashima' and the ongoing efforts of the Ministry of Commerce and Supplies in cooperation with the Nepal Bureau of Standards and Metrology to provide quality infrastructure facilities, Nepal's pashmina industry is on a promising way to regain its old strength. To maintain this momentum, the combined effort of government and private sector is essential for future success of the market. ■

Photo: © giacomofrigerio

Dominik Berger

10 FACTS ON PASHMINA

1. The origin of pashmina dates back to early ages when pashmina was renowned as the 'Fibre for royals and emperors'. Pashmina is the softest, exotically delicate, weightless and the finest natural insulating fibre in the world. It is also known as the "Diamond Fibre" and the "soft gold of high Asia".
2. The term pashmina comes from the Persian word "pashm" which means soft, light and silky.
3. The pashmina wool comes from changthangi/chyangra or pashmina goat (Capra Hircus), which is a special breed of goat indigenous to high altitudes of the Himalayas in Nepal, Pakistan and northern India.
4. Often, pashmina yarn and silk yarn are combined to get better fibre-strength, durability, colour pleasantness and fine finishing.
5. The goats are not harmed while extracting pashmina fibre. The wool is collected after being shed naturally. In addition, fibres can be collected regularly every spring from the same goat for many years. One goat sheds approximately 84-224 grams (3-8 ounces) of the fibre.
6. It takes the growth of three pashmina goats just to create one pashmina shawl. It takes around 15 days to spin enough pashmina to produce a shawl. The spun pashmina is then hand woven on a traditional loom, then cleaned and hand-dyed.
7. Pashmina wool is so delicate and is only 14-19 microns (a micron is 1 millionth of a meter) in diameter, that it cannot be spun by machine. A skilled spinner spins only around 20 grams per day.
8. The unique quality of the Pashmina is that it becomes softer and beautiful with use.
9. The good quality pashmina wool is taken from the underbelly of the goat, whereas often the wool of the cheaper pashmina is culled from the rougher parts of the animal for example the goat's back.
10. Pashmina products are usually made either from 100% pashmina or from wool, pure silk and different ratios of pashmina wool. Commonly the ratio is 70/30 silk -pashmina but a ratio of lower pashmina wool content like 50 /50 is also available in Nepal.

Photo: Tshering Norbu Sherpa