

The old order changeth yielding place to young and new at Apparel Exporters' AGM

● Appeal made by Apparel Exporters' Association falls on favourable ground - Mariani

● You are close to perfect, some questions beyond your control remain with one or two HR issues - Lummaux

Sri Lanka apparel exporters association held their annual general meeting on the 6th November followed by the post business session to which the press was invited to at 6.30 p.m. The outgoing immediate past president Noel Piyatilleka addressing the August assembly, recorded two years ago they categorized members into various segments. Prior to bidding farewell he aptly stated this was his "last lecture".

It had been an extreme and excellent pleasure for him which had been most meaningful, equally socially useful taking past obstacles head on, meaningfully tackling issues that were both logistical and local in nature that were viewed openly as hurdles and challenges,

with the support and solidarity of his exco, and in particular his I. P. P. Sukumaran were laid by Noel stated. In the South Asian Region India and Indonesia had got it right with upward movement of the dollar at realistic levels that was a filip for their exporters.

Note for the future

Pay attention. Trim sales make things leaner, watchout, take out line idle cost, commence operations on designs, styles and lines.

Engage government and E.U. on friendly and focussed dialogue clarifying the grey areas. Banks must be requested to take Cognisance not to restrict or limit credit. Positive changes such as the

younger generation Coming in to the forefront to lead from the front, to lead by example such as the duly elected Kumar from the former generation of his pater to the present generation presiding over the governance of the apparel exporters association.

Prior to handing over to the incumbent Noel stated Ashraff Omar was one of the best men who headed the association.

Newly elected Chairman

It was his pleasure to take over an honourable association founded 26 years ago. He had do his best during his first year in office to rejuvenate and invigorate youth said Kumar Mirchandani. The con-

tribution made by Noel and Rohan Abeykoon had been wonderful.

Wishing to reiterate politics and policy aside, the association must be compliant in norms, being mindful that should G.S.P. go away the cascading effect it would have on womens employment and empowerment.

In lighter vein he quipped of a Chinese curse "may you live in interesting times" talking of present times Kumar said that having taken financial battering apparel exporters showed their resilience, inspite of falling demands, mergers consolidation and closures.

Changes mean being innovative finding the will and drive.

Kumar smilingly spelled out his wish list.

(1) A friendlier tax regime, when at present V.A.T. has been a problem with it being a costly exercise to recover being remedied for the future.

(2) A must do appointing of a shipping regulator.

(3) Wages. Must be defined as minimum payable instead of across the board per annum done in ADHOC manner.

(4) Realistic exchange rate whilst government rationalise on the number of hours and days lost due to holidays on every calendar year.

(5) Financial support where necessary for the association for a 2 year period. Pursue vigorously diplomatic and trade ties. Becoming global citizens acting with dignity and pride for the betterment of all.

Kumar concluded by thanking all for having extended support to him.

Address by Ambassador Mariani

Opening his address Pio Mariani Ambassador for Italy stated it was privilege he felt being recognised as the Italians representative to address the forum where for the past three decades Italians had added value to Sri Lankan exports establishing themselves in the textile and garment apparel sector here in Sri Lanka. 10 Italian factories turnout sophisticated high value products based on trust, giving due recognition to the local labour force, with these old investors being tried and tested.

Textiles facing difficulties

The E.U. had not shied away with facing upto the realities and difficulties on the subject of GSP+. Some with a superficial knowledge stated the renewed conflict was the problem. That was irrelevant, whilst others predict the demise of the industry.

One must recognise fundamental value not merely economic but also social, village women folk employed in the apparel trade, must be compliant on rules on labour. His advice to the apparel exporters on the appeal made by the association on GSP+ falls "on favourable grounds". Italy is supportive, he said.

Clearly spell out what is fair and factual. The threat from recession in Europe and America must be addressed with contingency plans devised by the government. Maintain positive attitude coupled with collective competence to weather the storm by being even more competitive Mariani stated in closing.

Address by Ambassador Lummaux

In his opening remarks Michael Lummaux Ambassador for France noted France was the president of the European Union currently. Speaking directly on current affairs Lummaux stated in parliament the President on the basis of the Budget speech in delivery noted GSP+ was agreed upon and signed in the year 2005. The President in parliament with Lummaux among others stated this was nothing new with it being fulfilled even today.

Speaking on his personal thoughts

Lummaux taking the Apparel Exporters Association into confidence had this to say, "you are close to perfect, some questions beyond your control remain, one or two with regard to HR.

Analysis on same was on gong in an objective manner with no political pressure. Keep up with the pace on sustainable development Lummaux said. Fifteen countries are treated the same way on GSP+.

France has always had close relations since independence with Ceylon and thereafter the Sri Lankan republic, Lummaux hope was that Sri Lanka would benefit once two or three conventions on HR, that are undergoing investigation is concluded. France was aware of the social consequences that would impact on the subject of GSP+, Lummaux sincere wishes were for the woman folk in employment in the apparel trade, wishing Kumar well and congratulating him on being duly elected, concluded by stating take into account global crisis of economic downturn, maintain high objectives for the next twenty four months.

Vote of thanks

Yohan Lawrence, Treasurer wished to place on record his thanks to the immediate past president for all his inputs of energy and effort during the past two years. Welcomed incumbent president Kumar, concluding by thanking Italy and France for friendliness, and their favourable and continued support.

Leon Wickremasinghe