

Visdalia bamboo cluster selected under NBM

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Surat: In a major boost to tribal artisans, the Visdalia Cluster of Surat forest department has been selected as one of the nine clusters under the National Bamboo Mission (NBM) in the country. This is the only selected from Gujarat. Visdalia village is located 60 km from Surat on Kim-Zankhvav Road.

Bamboo crafts and furniture made by the artisans of Visdalia Cluster Gram Vikas Samiti, an initiative of the Surat forest division has made a mark for in the state. With this recognition and support under the NBM, the bamboo-based products' business is set to go beyond Gujarat and the country.

“The Visdalia cluster provides direct employment to over 120 people and indirect employment to more than 400. Now, the Bamboo unit has got recognition at the national level, which will boost the confidence of the artisans,” deputy conservator of forests (Surat Division), Puneet Nayyar, told TOI.

Rural artisan Jayshree Chaudhary and Vijay Vasava interacted with Union agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar on Tuesday from Visdalia. “Since this cluster was set up we have been getting work here and now don't need to migrate to cities,” said Chaudhary.

Vinit Prabhakar, head of the Visdalia cluster said that a team of 12 bamboo artisans have gone to Palghar near Mumbai and 20 others were in Junagadh to help set up Bamboo based units there. “Tribals from 32 villages are getting employment under Visdalia cluster and it is receiving orders from Delhi, Mumbai, Gandhinagar and Ahmedabad among other cities. First, we trained our tribal artisans and then hired interior designers and marketing professionals to support them,” said Prabhakar.

“We are setting up four specialized bamboo clusters in nearby villages for furniture, crafts, housing and interior design. Her specialized work will be done focus will be on high-end products for the urban markets,” he added.

The tribal bamboo artisans, who were once getting Rs 120 per day, are now earning Rs 300 per day, said forest officials.

The cluster runs 'Rural Mall' which is major attraction for its bamboo furniture and craft products. In fact, the bamboo outlets and the cafeteria at the Ekta Nursery near Statue of Unity (SoU) in Kevadia Colony are made by these artisans.

The initiative has made a remarkable development in bamboo products in the last two years and received a huge response from customers. The turnover of bamboo units zoomed to over Rs 1 crore from 11 lakh in two years.