

# Whose Association Is It Anyways?

The gems and jewellery industry comprises 90-95% by MSMEs, (Micro, Small, Medium Enterprises), as has been reported by numerous government agencies, including the most recent report by NITI Aayog's "Committee To Transform India's Gold Market". This could, potentially, explain the absence of a national association, considering that the industry is, by and large, fragmented. Obviously, the absence of a national association would further explain the reason as to why the government keeps doling out policy changes that are detrimental to the growth of the industry. While many associations claim otherwise, the reality is that none truly fit the bill and the infighting amongst them harms the industry more than uplifts it.

But whose association is it anyways? Surely, if formed, the Domestic Council ought to be the voice of the industry. A voice that should be in sync with the industry's needs and demands, but most importantly, it should



**The NITI Aayog Report suggests that the formation of a Domestic Council is imperative for the growth of our industry. This is a sentiment we all agree with, but should the status of the Domestic Council be assigned to any single association?"**

have a national footprint. While there may be several associations that may claim to be national, the truth is that they are not. They may all be aspiring to become national some day and they may have achieved

this in varying degrees, (from association to association), but the status as is today is simply that there is no such association that has a footprint throughout the nation.

The NITI Aayog Report suggests that the formation of a Domestic Council is imperative for the growth of our industry. This is a sentiment we all agree with, but should the status of the domestic Council be assigned to any single association?

As envisaged in the Report, the Domestic Council should be made up of all the various associations. Thus, it would be the "Association of Associations". This would help serve the industry on numerous levels. Firstly, this mechanism would enable all associations to coexist and take away the fight amongst the associations as to who truly represents the industry. Secondly, and equally importantly, it would take cognizance of the good work done by all the various associations, who could then

assist the Domestic Council through a structured mechanism that could be put into place. Of course, herein forth, in any/all meetings called by the government, it only would be the Chairperson of the Domestic Council that would represent the industry. All other associations would, thereafter, cease to act as the 'voice' of the industry, as this would be the role of the Domestic Council alone.

Currently, in any/all meetings called by any Ministry or government agency, the industry is represented by different associations, all whom have their own opinion on the subject matter being debated. This gives rise to a fuddled voice, as each person articulates and presents solutions to the said issue in their own individual manner. Very often conflicting views are given by different associations, thus leaving the officials in a conundrum as to how to resolve the concern at hand. All in all, this works against the best interests of the industry.

Coming back to the concept of the Domestic Council being an "Association of Associations", one may agree that such a notion would best serve the industry. What is confounding is why any single association



**Mr. Suresh Prabhu, Minister of Commerce & Industry, has recently tweeted his intention to form a Domestic Council as an "Association of Associations." This should be welcomed by the entire industry as a positive step towards the upliftment of the industry and all associations should come forward to provide support to this endeavour. All of us need to remember that this association, once formed, is not for any individual but for the entire industry."**

would aspire to be nominated as the Domestic Council, (and not the 'Association of Associations' format as conceptualised by the NITI Aayog Report), when they realise that it would be against the best interests of the industry. All associations are answerable to their members, in which case, would it be reasonable to expect that the members of each association should insist that their association not try and position itself as the Domestic Council, as the industry would be better served by a Domestic Council as envisioned by the

NITI Aayog Report? If so, would the office bearers of the respective association respect the mandate?

Which leads me to the question of "Whose Association Is It Anyways?" If it really is the industry's, then all the associations should come forward and insist for the Ministry of Commerce to form a Domestic Council that is made up of all the associations. The fact that Mr. Suresh Prabhu, Minister of Commerce & Industry, has recently tweeted his intention to form a Domestic Council as an "Association of Associations." This should be welcomed by the entire industry as a positive step towards the upliftment of the industry and all associations should come forward to provide support to this endeavour. All of us need to remember that this association, once formed, is not for any individual but for the entire industry. ■



The article is written by **Ajay Mehra**, Managing Director, Mehrasons Jewellers and Co-Chair, FICCI Gems and Jewellery Committee. He can be reached at [ajay@mehrasonsjewellers.com](mailto:ajay@mehrasonsjewellers.com)