

## Regulatory concerns

draw new members to AHFA

The American Home Furnishings Alliance said mounting concerns over regulatory compliance issues have helped drive up its membership ranks by 10% since the beginning of the year. The association, which represents the furniture industry in Washington, D.C., and elsewhere around the United States, said the increase was the largest seven-month member gain in the past 10 years for the group. AHFA did not supply the actual number of companies



that have joined, noting that doing so wasn't that simple. "Some umbrella companies join for all their subsidiaries; other umbrella companies allow each division or subsidiary to make the membership decision on their own," said Pat Bowling, AHFA vice president of communications. In a release, AHFA said it represents more than 200 furniture manufacturers and distributors and more than 150 suppliers to the industry. Among the issues AHFA has been tackling are:

**Upholstered furniture flammability** - AHFA provided technical advice to California officials last year as they revised TB 117, the state's flammability standard. AHFA said it hosted plant tours, shared research and data, and helped ensure the revised standard was workable. This year, it has turned its attention to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission and a proposed federal flammability standard. AHFA said it favors a federal standard that mirrors the California rule, but others are pushing for changes that could be costly for manufacturers.

**Flame retardant chemicals** - AHFA said it received more than 4,000 emails from consumers after HBO aired its "Toxic Hot Seat" documentary, and most were urging manufacturers to voluntarily remove all FR chemicals from their products. This year, the association said it has responded to the media and consumer advocates requesting accurate information about FR chemicals in upholstered furniture.

**Product safety** - AHFA is engaged with the Consumer Product Safety Commission and the American Society for Testing and Materials on initiatives impacting the industry, noting standards for horizontal glass, bunk beds and furniture tip-over have been updated in the past 12 months.

**Formaldehyde emission standards** - AHFA said it's the industry's primary advocate on both the California and the federal formaldehyde emission standards, offering information on the impact of compliance measures. Last year the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency released detailed implementation rules for the federal standard. AHFA described the potential impact of these rules as "grave" and enlisted the help of member companies in detailing the anticipated cost of implementing the rules to key members of Congress, it said. ■

Source : Furniture Today

## Housewares

a bright spot in Wal-Mart home

Overall sales were slow for Wal-Mart Stores during the second quarter, but housewares were top performers in the home departments at both Walmart U.S. and Sam's Club. Stand-outs in the home business at Walmart U.S. stores during the quarter were e-commerce and housewares brands Farberware, Shark and Keurig, according to Greg Foran, who took over this week as president and ceo of the division. Outdoor living was a drag on the department, he said.



At Sam's Club, home generated a mid-single-digit comp increase, led by kitchen electrics



and mattresses. For the quarter ended July 31, net income eked up 0.6% to \$4.1 billion, or \$1.21 per share - within the company's guidance. Consolidated sales rose 2.8% to \$119.3 billion. Consolidated U.S. same-store sales were flat for the period. Excluding fuel, comp was also flat at Walmart U.S. stores and at Sam's Club. The company's revised guidance calls for fiscal year earnings per share of \$4.90 to \$5.15, down from a range of \$5.10 to \$5.45.

Source : Home Textiles Today



## Home Guards and Civil Defence Medal for Mr. Najmul Islam in recognition for Clean Service Record

Mr. Najmul Islam, EPCH member exporter from Moradabad, has been awarded with the "Home Guards and Civil Defence Medal for Meritorious Service", in recognition of his sincerity, hard work and devotion backed by a clean service record.

The award was conferred by Director General, Fire Services, Civil Defence & Home Guards, Ministry of Home Affairs, Govt. of India, Mr. R.R Verma.



## JYSK and Danisches Bettenlager among firsts to accept "VRIKSH"



The timber legality and assessment and verification scheme - VRIKSH managed by EPCH got a major boost when 2 of Europeans biggest retailers viz JYSK and Danishes agreed to source "VRIKSH" certified materials from India. JYSK and Danisches were earlier sourcing wooden handicraft indoor and garden furniture from India. However, once the EU timber regulation came into effect they were hesitant to go ahead with procurement as it was not clear what steps would constitute due diligence under the regulations. Further, These companies like many other organizations in Europe, were not sure about how to prove legality of the timber originating from India. In this regard, in June 2014, one of the main supplier to these companies, Mr. Vinod Purohit of Art and Craft Inc. along with the Trade Point A.S Odense, Denmark, organized a meeting in Flensburg with JYSK and Danish officers along with a VRIKSH representative - Mr. Manu Jose Mattam from Scientific Certification Systems (India) Private Limited. JYSK was represented by, Mr. Lavis Ringtved Nielson - International product safety and quality manager. The Danish side was represented by Niels Hather Madsen - Director administrative procurement, logistics and social compliances.

During the meeting, Mr. Manu described and explained the working of VRIKSH and the processes involved, including Pilot Testing, stakeholder consultation and the field level assessments. Further it was assessed about the Third Party Verification program, which included the evaluation and verification program and had approval of Ministry of Environment and Forests, DGFT, EPCH and other social and legal bodies.

The JYSK and Danish team were also explained the audit process as well as the risk assessment and verification mechanism which lead to VRIKSH certification. It was shown how VRIKSH certification would meet the "due diligence" requirements of the EUTR and how companies can benefit from it. The JYSK and Danish personnel found the VRIKSH - timber legality and assessment satisfactory to meet the regulatory requirements of the EUTR and have decided to accept the certification as a mark of legality procured and manufacturing timber production from India. ■



## CREDIT ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

In the July Edition of Craftcil where Ramp Shows at IFJAS were covered, the name of Fashion Folio, makers of Fashion Bags, Fashion Jewellery, etc. was unintentionally missed out among exporting firms that contributed samples for the ramp sequences. The same is regretted.

## JCPenney home gaining back ground

As JCPenney's home business climbs out of the pit it fell into a year ago, the department's sales account for a bigger portion of revenue online than in stores. In the bricks realm, home contributes to 10% to 15% of total sales, said cfo Ed Record. Online, home comprises 30% to 40% of sales. That's down from its peak about a decade ago, when home merchandise was responsible for more than half of Penney's online business.

During the second quarter, home improved by double-digits, said Record. "I will tell you it's not where we need it to be. We're still working on top-line growth and profitability growth." He named Royal Velvet as one of the key brand drivers for the business.



For the quarter ended Aug. 2, the retailer's net loss narrowed to \$172 million from a net loss of \$586 million in the year-ago quarter. Gross margin improved 640 basis points from same quarter last year and 290 basis points sequentially from the first quarter of the current fiscal year. Sales rose 5.3% to \$2.80 billion. Online sales jumped 16.7% to \$249 million. Total comps climbed 6.0% for the quarter. For the first half of the fiscal year, net loss was cut to \$524 million from a net loss of \$934 million in the comparable period. Sales rose 5.7% to \$5.6 billion. ■ *Source: Home Textiles Today*

## Home Decor Pop art packs a punch

Mid-century modern style is now firmly planted in the home décor landscape. And one of its elements, pop art, is cultivating a 21st century following. Eye-catching, graphic, often tongue-in-cheek or sassily whimsical, pop art décor plays well off the vintage vibe and yet also makes contemporary furnishings, well, pop. In the 1950s, Abstract Expressionism dominated the art world. The canvas served as an arena for aggressive applications of paint. Conceptual, nonfigurative art found a strong following in the art world.

In the effervescent, culture-obsessed 1960s, artists mixed media art and lithographs that depicted the talismans of popular culture. They took inspiration from consumer culture, from soap boxes to soup cans, flags to the funny papers, Marilyn Monroe to Mao. While some critics derided it as jokey, low-brow or too focused on materialism, the



approachable imagery connected easily with mainstream consumerism, especially in USA. It was hip, fun and relatable.

Today, many designers consider pop art a classic, especially in interior and product design as it reflects an important time in design and continues to withstand so many fleeting trends. A manufacturer's whimsical little black upholstered chairs shaped like ponies, lambs and buffalo are among hot sellers. Here too is a vivid bubble-gum-pink and Slushie-blue map of the world, as well as acrylic coasters printed with blank cartoon-speech bubbles that can be written on with a reusable pen, and a series of canvas storage bins printed with old-school boom boxes, radios and TV sets.

A few pop art accessories in a room make a statement for a modest price. A manufacturer's cylindrical table lamp printed with comic-strip imagery and a collection of kicky, '70s-style graphic print pillows pack pop punch. Canvases and throw pillows from an art decor studio features some arresting, edgy designs, including a photorealistic image of a tableful of empty liquor bottles, a typographic traffic jam of color-blocked letters, and the word "POP" exploding like a cartoon graphic.

There are more to choose- white wall clock with colourful polka dots would be terrific in a child's room; black and white Optik pillow featuring a dizzying kaleidoscope of circles and stripes that's as much "op" as "pop." ■

*Source: Associated Press*