

News LETTER

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CITI

CONFEDERATION OF INDIAN TEXTILE INDUSTRY



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Cotlook A Index (Cent/lb)

30-01-2017	84.25
31-01-2017	83.50
01-02-2017	84.25
02-02-2017	85.75
02-02-2016	68.45
02-02-2015	67.05

New York Cotton Futures (Cents/lb) As on 05.02.2017

Mar 2017	76.41
May 2017	76.85
July 2017	77.77

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Fibre dumping

(Source: The Telegraph, February 06, 2017)

New Delhi : India may impose anti-dumping duty on the import of non-dyed polyester staple fibre ranging from 0.6 to 6 deniers from China, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand as it has found evidence of dumping of the product from these countries.

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'Seed companies colluding to control farm activities'

(Source: The Hindu, February 06, 2017)



Bharatiya Kishan Sangh president Baswa Goud hoisting the sangh flag marking the inaugural of the four-day national conference on the agriculture market yard in Nizamabad on Sunday:— Photo: K.V. RAMANA;K_V_RAMANA

Terrorism affecting not only the security forces but also farmers, says BKS chief

The four-day national conference of the Bharatiya Kisan Sangh began on the agricultural market yard here on Sunday. BKS All-India president Baswa Goud inaugurated the conference by Lighting the lamp. He hoisted the sangh flag before the inauguration ceremony.

Presenting his annual report, the BKS All India general secretary Badri Narayan Choudary said that the organisation last year conducted several hectic activities which impacted the public at large, particularly farmers of the nation. "Terrorist activities

encouraged by our neighbouring country not only affected the security forces but also farmers,” he said.

Domestic seed companies compromised with foreign companies to have complete control over seed production. However, the BKS with the support of people successfully prevented the evil designs of the foreign seed companies. The struggle should go a long way since the foreign multi-national companies wanted to occupy the fertile lands and get control over the agricultural activities of the country, he said.

Though the government was trying to improve the status of farmers by introducing several schemes, some structural problems were coming in the way of their effective implementation. Crop and life insurance policies relating to farming community had some lacunae and unless they were removed they would not benefit farmers.

Mr. Choudary said that the BKS strongly opposed the introduction of GM seeds despite the government believed that it was only the option to ensure the food security to people. B.T cotton has been a big failure. According to the Central Cotton Research Centre BT cotton was not a high yielding variety, he said. In his report he explained the year-long activities of the BKS in all the States and Union Territories during 2016. The conference paid homage to the sangh members who passed away in the last one year by observing one-minute silence.

The sangh secretaries Mohini Mohan Mishra and K. Sai Reddy and others also spoke. About 600 delegates from all over the country were attending the conference. In the evening they took out an impressive rally in the town.

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Mega silk cluster to be set up in Belavadi village

(Source: H.S. Narasimha Kumar, The Hindu, February 06, 2017)

A mega silk cluster will soon be set up in 10 acres of land in Belavadi village, on the outskirts of Mysuru, at an approximate cost of ₹50 crores. This is one of the six silk clusters to be set up across the country under the revised National Handloom Development Programme.

The Union government has appointed the Karnataka State Textile Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd. (KSTIDCL) as cluster management and technical agency. Efforts are on to register a Special Purpose Vehicle for the implementation and funding of the silk cluster.

G. Thippesh, chairman, KSTIDCL and G.P. Srinivasmurthy, Managing Director, told The Hindu that twisting, yarn dyeing, warping, fabric dyeing and printing, and calendaring were among many functions that would be provided at the cluster. They said that 25 silk traders had been identified and each one of them has agreed to invest around ₹40 lakhs in the cluster.

Project report

A detailed project report for the cluster is being prepared with the assistance of Infrastructure Development Corporation Karnataka Limited (IDECK). Roads, drainage systems, water, power and solid waste management systems, a training hall, a bank and an ATM would be set up, Mr. Srinivasmurthy said. He added that the project may come up in another eight months.

Employment opportunities

He further said that the proposed silk cluster, being a labour-intensive industry, would open up huge employment opportunities besides fuelling local economy by spanning ancillary industries.

Mysuru and its surrounding regions are known for sericulture, and the famed Mysore Silk has been accorded the Geographic Indication tag in view of its uniqueness. It is proposed to name the cluster Mysore Sri Chamundeshwari mega silk cluster.

Mr. Thippesh said that the cluster would be set up under a public-private partnership. He noted that the Union government would bear 60% of the total cost while the State government would bear 30% and remaining 10% would be borne by the entrepreneurs. The cluster would enable the weavers to produce quality silk saris in an abundant quantity, he said.

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Making fashion inclusive

(Source: Naveena Vijayan, The Hindu, February 06, 2017)



Adaptive fashion makes it easy for the differently-abled to slip into their clothes. These garments score high on comfort and are just as dapper, writes NAVEENA VIJAYAN

In 2015, New York Fashion Week Fall/Winter featured differently-abled models on the ramp. This, besides bringing a fresh perspective to an industry that is obsessed with size zero models, also sprung new terms such as adaptive clothing and inclusive fashion. While there have been brands such as IZ Collection that have featured adaptive clothing for a long time, fashion has slowly become more democratic since 2015.

For instance, last year, Tomy Hilfiger brought out a new collection of adaptive clothing for kids, and German-based Bezgraniz, one of the leading brands in this genre of clothing, presented its collection in the famed Los Angeles Fashion Week in October last year. The movement, as it turns out, has finally come home with fresh fashion design graduates taking it up as their line of expertise, and helped many such as National Award-winning para-shooter and para-swimmer Justin Vijay Jesudas dress up easy.

Though paralysed chest down, Jesudas drives to work for his swimming sessions, goes for shooting practice and to the gym everyday, all by himself. “But one of the most challenging things in my routine is dressing up,” he says. Wheelchair-bound, it is hard for Jesudas to button up his shirts or zip up his trousers. For a long time, since his accident in 2011, the only alternative was to wear oversized T-shirts and get help from his family to wear his trousers. But that’s only until he met designers Namrata Chandrasekhar and Shalini Viswanathan.

Chandrasekhar, who graduated from National Institute of Fashion Technology, Chennai, last year, took up adaptive clothing as the topic for her final-year project in college. As part of her research, she interacted with Jesudas over the course of four months, trying to understand his requirements and his restrictions in movement. “Based on this, I brought out a collection of clothing which included casual wear, party wear, and those to simply chill by the beach,” she says, over a call from Bengaluru, where she works as a fashion stylist. A video clip she created as part of her project shows Jesudas in black party wear with stretchable panels on the sides, pants with pouches on the thigh rather than the back, and trousers that can be worn as shorts or be pulled to their full length.

“In inclusive fashion, it is very important to get all the inputs from the person that you are creating the clothes for. For example, Jesudas cannot move his fingers, so I used magnets for the top three buttons and normal ones for the rest, so that he could wear it like a T-shirt,” she says. But Jesudas found that the magnetic buttons couldn’t support the weight of the shirt and came off often, so Chandrasekhar replaced it with a strap of Velcro. Given there are no set standards in the industry to follow when it comes to clothing for the physically challenged, “it is the result of a lot of trial and error,” she says. Chandrasekhar also observed that Jesudas puts a lot of pressure on his palm to propel his wheelchair, as he has weak biceps and triceps. “Since there is constant friction, his palms are callused. He used Therabands before, but I made gloves that have silicon prints on the palm area, and they can be strapped on easily as they use Velcro. This gives him the required grip on the push-rims. While he can push 500 metres with bare hands, with gloves on, he can push for two kilometres,” she says.

Meanwhile, Viswanathan, who holds a diploma in fashion from NIFT, Chennai, recently showcased her line of inclusive clothing under the brand name Suvastra as part of the Trios Fashion Show at Hilton. It was the first fashion show in India featuring wheelchair-bound people on the ramp, claims Jesudas. One of the highlights was a nighty that doubles up as a sari. "The one-piece garment can be worn as nightwear, but looks just like a sari complete with blouse, pleats and pallu," says Viswanathan, who got into adaptive clothing two years ago, while designing clothes for her husband, who has polio. "I realised there were no brands offering inclusive clothing options. I knew the difficulty my husband faced, so I started making clothes for him. Since they came out well, his friends wanted me to make clothes for them as well. The demand eventually saw me making a whole new line," she says.

The new Indo-Western collection includes pants with belts to help shift people from one place to another, extra-length elastic palazzos and crop tops with long zippers, and gowns with zips on the side and back.

Currently, there are no labels that have a section dedicated to inclusive fashion in India, she claims. "If you run a Google search, you might find 10 to 15 white papers on inclusive fashion, out of which half are outdated," adds Jesudas.

It's still in a very nascent stage, though there has been increasing awareness globally. But as far as an exclusive line is concerned, the numbers are still few, says Chandrasekhar.

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Fashion industry has embraced handlooms with admiration: Designer

(Source: Durga Chakravarty, Daiji World February 05, 2017)

popularised the use of Khadi. Award-winning textile designer Gaurang Shah is more than happy that the Indian fashion industry has welcomed handlooms.

"As a textile designer, I would like to say the indian fashion industry has embraced handlooms with lot of admiration and helped revive our ancient traditions of weaving art, like the jamdani weaves, that we use in creating our fashion pieces," Shah told IANS. "It also reinforced its unparalleled beauty around the world," he added.

The designer says that one must acknowledge the passion and intense amount of production hours every weaver at the looms puts to bring out timeless pieces of handlooms.

"The fashion industry did contribute to bring them back into vogue in recent years," he said.

Shah showcased his latest collection of 40 garments titled Muslin at Lakme's Fashion Week Summer/Resort 2017. His anthology for the gala was inspired by romance of nature.

Giving details about his range, he said: "Our collection incorporates weaves and techniques from West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. The amazing all-in-whites collections integrate gorgeous Mughal motifs and geometric patterns on Khadi, chikankari embroidery and Parsi gara."

The designer's collection involved 50 weavers working relentlessly for over six months. Shah, whose handloom creation made its way to the 69th Cannes Film Festival when Deepshikha Deshmukh, producer of Aishwarya Rai Bachchan starrer "Sarbjit", stepped out in an ensemble featuring Paithani and Kanjeevaram details, says that handlooms are a glorious heritage of India and it is important to preserve and help the artists' community grow.

"I would like to add that a few years ago this beautiful art was fading away. Thanks to persistent effort and motivation from label like ours, followed by the efforts of our Prime Minister Narendra Modi, that pushed indian handlooms to higher level of acceptance," he said.

Shah began his journey in the textile world with just two weavers and today the label works with 700 weavers, and the number is still growing.

"The biggest contribution we as a designer can make is to keep our artisans motivated and also help them gain confidence that it is a highly profitable profession," said the designer, who has styled the stars like Vidya Balan, Sonam Kapoor and Kirron Kher.

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An Indian Summer

Traditional with a contemporary twist ruled the runway on Day Three of Lakme Fashion Week Summer/Resort 2017

(Source: Kimi Dangor, The Indian Express, February 06, 2017)



Photo by Dilip Kagda.

JUST when fashion watchers were beginning to tire of the endless parade of boxy dresses, the sameness of sack-like silhouettes and a surfeit of earthy textile hues that walked the runway on the first two days of Lakme Fashion Week (LFW) Summer/Resort 2017, courtesy designers championing the cause of sustainable fashion, there was a marked change in pace and presentation on Day Three. Friday saw a parade of lehenga skirts, dhoti pants, kedia tops and cape blouses take over, subverting the narrative and presenting the flipside of the coin that constitutes contemporary Indian fashion. Gone were the unfinished hems, unadorned textiles, coarse cottons and gauche detailing, replaced instead by beaded tunics, luxurious lace and zardozi embroidery.

They may have been unceremoniously tagged as the “commercial crowd”, but this crop of designers are the ones pushing the — oft-abused and seldom actualised — ‘Indo-Western’ ideology. Designer Payal Singhal, for one, calls her creations “global fusion Indian clothes” and has no qualms about being called a “commercially successful” designer.

And she subscribed to same style sentiment on Friday evening with her glamorous line “Lady M”, inspired by Agatha Christie’s dark romantic murder mystery *Death on the Nile*. While it ticked off all the boxes in the Indianwear category, she lent a resolutely modern touch to the collection with the retro Gatsby-esque flair of fringed beaded tunics and jazzy dresses. Art Deco embroidery laden lehenga skirts were teamed with silken blouses and asymmetric skirts were worn over cancons.

Low crotch dhoti pants were paired with beaded kaftans and slinky camisoles and scalloped edges lined tops and jackets. The colour palette was decidedly unconventional with midnight blue, gunmetal, navy, blush and emerald meeting champagne, pale rose and blue hues, ideal for Singhal’s large NRI clientele and the destination wedding-hopping crowd.

Designers Monica Shah and Karishma Swali also experimented with fusion silhouettes for their luxury pret label Amoh by Jade. There were Victorian lace edged angarkha-style kurtas, blouses paired with tailored dhoti pants and coquettish corset tops worn with scarlet palazzos. We especially loved a plain rose gold lehenga that was offset by a classic ivory blouse and a ruby red cape.

Hints of ivory added a Victorian appeal to SVA’s spring-summer collection “Noor” too. Sonam and Paras Modi steered clear of their recent preoccupation with brocade weaves and instead presented a British Raj-influenced collection primarily playing with embroidery and drapes. Cape sleeves on off-shoulder blouses, peplum jackets teamed with dhoti-style tulip pants and asymmetrical sari drape tunics were embellished with intricate zardozi and pita work, giving the appearance of delicate lace. Again, a muted palette of greys, burnt rose, green tea and ecru kept the collection from looking singularly Indian in sensibility.

In contrast, Delhi label Madsam Tinzin introduced a native sensibility rarely seen on Indian runways — that of the Brok-Pa tribe from Ladakh. While surface ornamentation was used to replicate the texture details of Brok-Pa fabrics and materials like cotton-

chanderi, kota, modal-linen and matka silk were used for their earthy appeal, the silhouettes remained breezy, contemporary and imminently wearable.

And in many ways, the work of Madsam Tinzin, the amalgamation of the design experiences of friends and NIFT graduates Madhurita, Saumya, Tina and Stanzin, is pretty much a representation of the Indo-western wave that's sweeping contemporary Indian fashion, straddling the chasm between commercial concerns and aesthetic appeal. May their tribe grow.

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ITMACH India to take place in Dec; host 45000 visitors

(Source: February 04, 2017)



Courtesy: ITMACH India

The second edition of ITMACH India, the International Textile Machinery and Accessories exhibition, is likely to have over 750 exhibitors from around the world and over 45,000 business visitors. It will be held from December 7-10, 2017, in Gandhinagar, Gujarat. The Indian Textile Sourcing Exhibition (ITSE) will also take place concurrently with ITMACH India.

Jointly organised by K and D ITMACH Expositions LLP and Spinners Association (Gujarat), the fair will cover 40,000 square meters of exhibition space. It will host entire ranges of textile machinery and technology including spinning, weaving, knitting, dyeing, printing, processing, digital printing, nonwoven and technical textiles, garmenting, quality control, utility machinery and so on.

Several well-known machinery companies have already confirmed their participation in ITMACH India, according to the organisers.

As for the ITSE fair, it would cover the entire textile value chain with the aim to promote sourcing of made in India textiles and apparels.

Indian textile industry's growing need of textile machinery and technology backed by continued investment and modernisation of production capacities is expected to grow in



the next three years. The prime drivers of the upbeat investment mood are government's enhanced allocation of funds towards technology up-gradation subsidy schemes, infrastructure building approach, export incentives and moreIMPORTANTLY the fastest growing economy of the country.

lucrative state government textile policies are also wooing investors to create employment and additional revenue sources. The state of Gujarat is leading the investment in textile sector for past few years. With investment worth \$1.2 billion announced by a couple of large textile players at the recently concluded Vibrant Gujarat Business Summit, the total investment plans in textile sector could easily exceed \$10 billion. (KD)

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Mexico Mulls Retaliatory Textile Tariffs To Counter Trump

The Mexican textile and apparel industry is under threat from Trump's possible 20 percent tariff, and is eyeing other overseas markets to replace potential lost orders from the U.S.

(Source: Ivan Castano, WWD, February 05, 2017)



If the proposed 20 percent tariff is levied (among other options) to pay for Trump's border wall and Mexico hits back, "we could grow below zero," Mercado said, adding that exports could plunge 10 percent, despite a record-low peso.

MEXICO CITY — Mexico could slap “mirror” tariffs against U.S. fabric and apparel imports if U.S. President Trump imposes a 20 percent or other duty on Mexican imports, something textile executives say would severely harm cross-border manufacturers and retailers alike.

“It would be a good idea if the government did something to compensate against this [the Trump tariff],” said Sixto Mercado, vice president of top trade lobby Canaive’s branch in Jalisco State, home to Guadajara. “We have many apparel exporters here who would be affected.”

His comments come as Mexico is set to begin negotiating the North American Free Trade Agreement by May to meet Trump’s calls for a rewrite. That said, economy minister Ildefonso Guajardo said in mid-January that if Trump imposes a tariff or a border adjustment tax, Mexico would pursue “mirror actions.”

The statement is an indication of the growing tensions between the two neighboring countries, longtime allies, as Trump pursues his plan to build a wall along the border and claims that Mexico will pay for it. The 20 percent tariff or other duty proposal forms part of the plan to fund the wall.



A Facebook post showing an empty Walmart store in Mexico. Courtesy

The U.S. ships roughly \$6.5 billion worth of apparel and textiles to Mexico — \$4 billion is fabric and \$1.2 billion apparel parts, according to Canaive. Conversely, Mexico sends back \$4.5 billion worth of clothing and textiles — \$3.5 billion of apparel and \$1 billion of textiles.

A possible trade war has strained diplomatic relations and unleashed a nationalist uproar in Mexico with populist groups calling for consumers to boycott American companies including Wal-Mart, Starbucks and McDonalds. Social media is abuzz with tweets-for-tats urging citizens buy Mexican goods with hashtags such as #AdiosWalmart, allegedly hitting sales at the U.S. discounter's largest international division. One tweet showed a Wal-Mart hypermarket in Tepeyac, Guadalajara as empty during peak sale hours on payday. The tweet claimed the store is the retailer's largest selling in Latin America.

A Wal-Mart spokesman said the firm is “monitoring the situation” but had no further comment.

If the proposed 20 percent tariff is levied (among other options) to pay for Trump's border wall and Mexico hits back, “we could grow below zero,” Mercado said, adding that exports could plunge 10 percent, despite a record-low peso.

In 2016, the textiles and apparel sector grew 5 percent as strong local apparel sales offset a 4.3 percent drop in U.S. sales.

As Mexico flirts with a possible recession, Mixto said local sales could this year grow 7 percent compared to 10 percent in 2016. Amid strong anti-American sentiment, he said local-brand turnover could eclipse U.S. brands for the first time in recent memory.

“We have never seen such strong nationalism in Mexico,” Mercado said. “Everyone is being urged to buy Mexican products. This will hit American brand sales.”

Many consumers could shun Wal-Mart in lieu of Mexican archrival Coppel or choose to buy at department-store chain Liverpool’s lower-end unit Fabricas de Francia. Mexican fashion designers, long in the shadows, could win consumer hearts.

This is bad news for the likes of the Axo or El Palacio de Hierro network, which have grown by bringing aspirational U.S. brands such as ck Calvin Klein, Tommy Hilfiger and Abercrombie & Fitch south of the border. An executive at Axo said the 20-brand franchisor has not seen “any sales declines” from the patriotic upsurge and is operating “business-as-usual.”

It’s clear Axo and rival Sordo Madaleno, a top architecture firm making a leap into foreign fashion licensing (it just opened Mexico’s first AllSaints outlet) will suffer as consumers tighten their belts and seek “Made in Mexico.”

To meet the challenges, Mexican apparel producers are seeking new markets in Central America and Europe with which Mexico has a largely vague free-trade agreement.

“Costa Rica, Panama and Central America could be good markets to compete on price and quality but not Argentina and Brazil, because they have very strong industries and brands,” Mercado said.

In Europe, Mexican fashion jean labels Oggi and Siete Leguas could make successful forays because they have high-quality products using innovative fabrics and new washing technologies, according to Mercado.

“These companies sell premium jeans to Levi’s, Wrangler and True Religion so they could also start selling in Europe.”

That will require even more innovation, training and other investment the industry has been slow to pursue.

“We need to make more fashion and design and to diversify our exports because we are too dependent on the U.S.,” said Alfonso Zepeda, the man behind Expo Denim, a denim trade fair set to open in Guadjalajara in late May, adding that European expansion should be a priority.

“Europe represents a huge opportunity with our low peso,” he said. “There are niches we could exploit. Here in Jalisco we make great coats, cotton knits, denim pants and suits. We could sell these to smaller, H&M-like stores.”

Manuel de la O, sales director at sewing machine maker Casa Diaz, echoed views that U.S. consumers would pay for any Trump tariff and that American brands will have a hard time replacing Mexican suppliers, at least right away.

“They could send their orders to Vietnam or China and save the 20 percent but then the fleet costs would be 5 percent and the investment and costs associated with the geographical shift could bring that to 13 percent,” said de la O. “If you add to that a 3 to 4 percent [possible] mirror tariff from Mexico, would you sacrifice quality for such a small margin gain?”

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Nigeria : Why textile industry is moribund, by minister

(Source: Franca Ochigboon, The Nation, February 06, 2017)

The Minister of Industry, Trade and Investment, Dr. Okechukwu Enelamah has blamed the moribund state of the textile industry on lack of cotton and critical infrastructure, such as electricity supply.

He lamented that these factors had been frustrating the government’s attempt to revive the sector.

Enelamah, who spoke with reporters in Abuja at the weekend, said the situation in the textile sector was very complex.

He said: “On the textile industry, it is a very complex situation, it has a problem of value chain, we don’t have enough cotton for them to produce so we are engaging the Ministry of Agriculture. We are also hoping to get some seeds for farmers to plant.

“The government is working on ensuring people patronise made-in-Nigeria and wear them at least once a week officially, that way, we can raise patronage for the textile industry. Resolving these issues takes a while but we are working on it.

“The Vice President’s visit to Aba is to interact with the Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) is called the MSMEs clinic; it is a new initiative that with time will spread to all states of the federation. We had to take the service to the people rather than waiting for them to come. Another reason is that in most cases, access is not always easy for them, what it means is that they now have the contact to follow up, and know the government’s policy direction on ease of doing business.

“We are very delighted that the clinic kicked off in Aba, the clinic will move from there to all the zones. The idea of the clinic is to have all the relevant key agencies to render services to those people located where the MSMEs are. In Aba, we had a stand where the

people came asked questions bordering on issues concerning their trading activities, and these issues were addressed.

“On trade policy, we review our trade policy every five years; there is one going on right now, the trade policy review involves engaging multiple stakeholders in the economy and their input on how the trade policy works. It involves trade experts to advise you, you engage the world agency of trade, trade department with the trade adviser and negotiator, then they help to prepare a good material, that is where we are, the process will be finished this year, we started last year, where we are now is that the consultation is ongoing and should be wrapped up before the end of 2017.”

On the sugar policy, he said: “The sugar policy has been ongoing for years now; the backward integration policy is one of the most successful, it is like the cement success story, the same policy was adopted for sugar, when we talked sugar, we look at sugarcane which is grown widely in Nigeria; we also have other sources of sugar like ethanol. In producing our own sugar there should be enough production capacity in the country either in terms of the basic raw materials or the processing.

“The government, with time, will involve stakeholders to go into massive production of sugarcane. Nigeria consumes 1.4million tons of sugar in a year, almost all of that sugar was imported until 2013-2014 when the National Sugar Master Plan was put in place, and that master plan gave some importers concessions over a time period while we monitor the ability to produce the sugar locally.”

Enalemah said the target right is to produce 4000,00 metric tons of sugar locally over a 10-year period so that players, such as Dangote, Flourmill and Bua, could produce without any difficulty. He said the production of sugar is capital intensive.

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Chinese textile firm fined for toxic waste in northern Vietnam

(Source: VnExpress International, February 05, 2017)



Part of the Lai Vu Industrial Park in Hai Duong Province where the Pacific Crystal textile plant is located. Photo by VnExpress/Huy Thuong

Pollution and natural disasters could cost the country about 0.6 percent of its annual gross domestic product between now and 2020.

A Hong Kong-based textile firm in Vietnam's northern province of Hai Duong has been fined for discharging wastewater that exceeded permitted levels of toxic waste. Mayor Nguyen Duong Thai issued a fine of VND672 million (\$29,372) to Pacific Crystal Textiles Limited in the Lai Vu Industrial Park in Kim Thanh District, VietnamPlus reported on Sunday.

The company was also asked to ensure any wastewater discharged in the future meets local government standards. Pacific Crystal began commercial operations at its \$425-million plant in Hai Duong in December 2015.

Following a similar incident in June last year, Vietnam's Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment inspected the Lee&Man Paper Manufacturing Company, a Chinese paper manufacturing plant in the southern province of Hau Giang, following media reports about possible environmental damage to the Mekong River.

In another large-scale environmental disaster, Formosa Ha Tinh Steel, which runs an \$11 billion steel plant in the central province of Ha Tinh, polluted a 200km stretch of coastline in April last year, killing more than 100 tons of fish and devastating the environment, jobs and economies of four provinces in the central region.

According to the General Statistics Office (GSO), violations of the country's environmental regulations in 2016 were recorded at some 80 percent of industrial parks. Foreign-invested firms accounted for 60 percent of 50 companies caught discharging waste that exceeds the allowable standards, according to the GSO.

The National Center for Socio-Economic Information and Forecast recently declared that environmental pollution has severely impeded Vietnam's economic growth. The center warned that pollution and natural disasters could cost the country about 0.6 percent of its annual gross domestic product between now and 2020.

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Australia : Off-target weed herbicide spray drift damages more than half of NSW's cotton crops

(Source: Cara Jeffery, ABC Rural, February 06, 2017)



PHOTO: Damage from off-target weed herbicide spray drift on cotton crops. (ABC Rural: Cara Jeffery)

More than half the cotton crops planted across southern NSW have been damaged by off-target weed herbicide spray drift, according to Cotton Australia.

About 30,000 hectares of the 57,000 hectares of cotton growing across the Murrumbidgee and Lachlan areas had been affected.

Cotton Australia's regional manager in Griffith, Honi Anderson, said drift from Group I herbicides such as 2,4-Dichlorophenoxyacetic acid (2,4-D) being used to control summer weeds in fallow paddocks was harming cotton crops.

"In the crops that I've looked at it's definitely Group I damage, but it's very difficult to pinpoint what crops or what fallow situations it's coming from," Ms Anderson said.

"The weather conditions have not been helping keep those sprays effectively stay on the property they are intended for."

Ms Anderson said the damage was extremely widespread this season and very few crops had not been impacted.

"In some crops the damage is low to moderate, some would be quite severe and in others it's quite patchy," she said.

Ms Anderson said she had been flooded with calls over the past six weeks from growers and agronomists identifying damage.

"Depending on the severity, it looks quite ugly and it's quite distinctive," she said.

"It's like a witches hand effect on the leaf, the leaf shrivels up and cups over.

"Low level damage can just be a slight cupping and bubbling of the leaf."

Ms Anderson called for growers, agronomists and contractors to utilise the online Cotton Map tool which identified the location of cotton crops.

"It's important growers are communicating with their neighbours that they are growing cotton as it's a very sensitive crop," she said. The full impact of the off-target spray drift would not be known until picking.

"Some of the plants I have seen with severe damage are throwing squares off and that is definitely going to have an impact on yield," Ms Anderson said.

"Other crops, where damage is quite light, it shouldn't have an impact.

"But the compounding issue is crops were generally planted late due to it being wet, so that coupled with spray drift issues isn't helping yield potential."



PHOTO: Murrumbidgee grower Ben Dal Broi inspecting his cotton affected by the spray drift. (ABC Rural: Cara Jeffery)

Cotton crop cops it

Murrumbidgee grower Ben Dal Broi reported moderate damage occurred in the 100 hectares of cotton growing on his Benerembah property.

"We're hoping that we might be able to get away with very light damage at picking, but the thing that concerns me is that should we have another event it could be much more damaging and that would really affect our profitability," Mr Dal Brio said.

He said the impact of off-target spray drift was much worse on his property this season due to the wet summer and croppers spraying weeds.

"People need to be very careful about the conditions they spray under, they need to very careful when they spray at night — particularly when there is a temperature inversion as the chemical can drift a long way and affect crops a distance away," Mr Dal Broi said.

He said it had been a harder season for cotton than the two prior seasons, but still hopes to average 10 bales a hectare.

"We had a slower start with the wet winter and it was very difficult to get on the paddocks and get beds up and prepared for sowing," he said.

"So the cotton was planted later, and then we had some insect damage so we lost some of the fruit.

"But since then it has been much warmer and the crop had lifted its head and is powering away."

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Bangladesh : BGMEA asks for a single inspection agency

(Source: Refayet Ullah Mirdha, The Daily Star, February 06, 2017)



Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) wants a single agency rather than the three at present to inspect and monitor progress in remediation of garment Factories.

The BGMEA has prepared a new guideline for the next phase of inspection of the apparel production units in a bid to reduce hassles and set a unified code of inspection.

All three inspection agencies apply different codes in inspection, and as a result, many owners face challenges in remedying their factories.

Currently, the Accord and the Alliance -- the inspection agencies of European and North American retailers and brands -- and the National Initiative backed by the government are inspecting and suggesting remediation to boost workplace safety. The agencies are now trying to extend their tenure.

The tenure of the legally binding Accord and Alliance will come to an end in June 2018. This is why the BGMEA has prepared a draft guideline, which will be placed in a meeting on February 9 for finalisation.

“We are ready to place the draft with the inspection agencies,” said Mahmud Hasan Khan Babu, vice-president of BGMEA. In the new guideline, the association also wants the inclusion of the government, BGMEA, International Labour Organisation, trade unions and global retailers in the agency's core committee.

Babu said the BGMEA has already discussed the matter with Alliance, and negotiations are ongoing with the Accord for the finalisation of the draft.

The new guideline will remain effective till 2021, and after that, the Remediation Coordination Cell, a body of the Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments, will monitor the processes, he added.

BGMEA wants the terminology 'legally binding' from the present article of the Accord and Alliance to be removed, when the new guideline comes into force, he said.

The BGMEA formed a five-member committee in October last year to develop a strategy to cope with the situation following the expiry of the Accord and Alliance.

Under the new initiative, factory assessment would be done on an individual basis and failure in the remediation in any particular unit would not impact other production units belonging to the same group.

Laws of the land will be applicable regarding closure of factories, compensation for workers and penalty for the factory owners, according to the draft strategy.

In the draft guideline, BGMEA proposed that signatory buyers continue their contributions for the initial period (June 2018–June 2020), but at half of the rates that they have been paying to the Accord and Alliance since 2013.

The BGMEA proposed that third-party auditors, having prior experience in audit and certification with the Accord and Alliance, will be hired for conducting all structural, fire and electrical audit.

The new factories will have to pay for their inspections.

Accord has so far conducted initial inspections at 1,600 factories while Alliance inspected 759 factories.

At the same time, under the National Action Plan, the Bangladesh government, in collaboration with the ILO, inspected around 1,500 factories.

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Would you wear a leather jacket grown in a lab?

(Source: Karen Hao, Quartz, February 05, 2017)



The environmentally friendly solution to looking cool. (Reuters/Kai Pfaffenbach)

It's hard to place a finger on what makes leather so alluring. Perhaps it's the unique supple strength, the timeless chic, or the primal intimacy of donning animal skin. The highly-coveted material is used across the fashion, automotive, and interior design industries, and it tops the charts as one of the world's most widely traded commodities. Measured in economic terms, its desirability is staggering: In 2010, the United National

Industrial Development Organization valued the global economy for leather products at roughly \$100 billion per year.

But such a far-reaching market doesn't come without equally far-reaching costs. Traditional leather production leaves behind a vast carbon footprint, a destructive trail of environmental pollution, brutal animal suffering, and, often, disturbing human-rights violations. Leather tanners, for example, suffer higher rates of cancer, respiratory diseases, and other life-shortening health issues from long-term toxic chemical exposure than the average office worker.

Over the years, several ventures have sought to tap into the boom of the trade while also attempting to find the panacea to these ills. Countless fashion brands have advertised faux alternatives; other companies have sworn by sourcing only from discarded leather cut-offs. But the most compelling approach is being taken by biotech companies such as Brooklyn-based startup Modern Meadow.

Founded in 2011, Modern Meadow has turned to biotechnology to literally grow leather in a lab. It works like this: Using DNA-sequence editing, ordinary cells are transformed into little factories that churn out collagen, which is the main structural protein found in animal skin. As they churn, the cells are rapidly grown on a diet of nutrients until their collagen forms into a network of fibers. The fibrous sheet is then processed into a "hide" that can be tanned and fashioned into various products. This material is biologically comparable to one procured directly from the backs of animals, but avoids harming any living animals in the process. Subsequently, the method eliminates the ethical questions of raising livestock, as well as limits the human and environmental impact of preparing and treating leather.



Modern Meadow's cell engineering lab (Modern Meadow)

"We're building an entire biofabrication platform," says Suzanne Lee, the company's chief creative officer and former fashion designer. "We're really just beginning to scratch the surface of what is possible."

From a design perspective, being able to engineer a leather-like material allows for entirely new textile opportunities and designs to be explored. “You can create something that is thinner but stronger, lighter but has some new functionality built into it,” she says.

For the consumer, the technology opens up intriguing possibilities, too. Aside from the obvious advantage of ethically conscious shoppers being able to enjoy minimal-impact, high-quality leather, there’s also the possibility of growing the skins of rare—or even extinct—species. Woolly mammoth blazer, anyone? “Obviously it’s not our first priority to take extinct species and bring them back to life,” Lee says, “but it’s exactly the kind of thing that is possible with this technology.”

In June of last year, Modern Meadow announced a successful \$40 million round of funding to gear up for commercialization. They currently have a lab-scale pilot plant that supplies enough materials to their partners for prototyping purposes, but the new money will allow the company to build a larger pilot plant for bringing their first-generation products to market. Lee estimates that their products will begin to arrive in consumer hands in just a couple of years.



Lab-grown leather taking life (Modern Meadow)

However, the path to commercial viability will not come without challenges. Growing a sheet of tanned leather from a genetically modified cell is currently a several-week process. This is far better than the time scale of traditional leather production—“think about how many years it takes to actually produce an animal and get to something that can be used as leather,” Lee says. But the company’s multidisciplinary team of PhDs, who include cell engineers, material scientists, tanners, and product developers, is working to tighten the design-iteration cycle and meet the demands of mass production.

During the company’s early stages, critics of Modern Meadow claimed that the vision of creating slaughter-free leather was a little too good to be true. As evidence, they pointed to the company’s use of “donor” animal cells and fetal-bovine serum, which is the most commonly used growth medium for culturing cells—but is also controversially sourced

from live calf fetuses. But the company has since phased out both animal cells and animal-based growth mediums, according to the press representative.

Modern Meadow's cruelty-free status will likely expand the market for leather by appealing to a new subset of consumers. For example, vegans and vegetarians who choose to abstain from traditional leather products may find Modern Meadow an exciting, ethically sound alternative. The prospect of ditching cheap faux animal substitutes, which are often made of environmentally unfriendly materials, for biofabricated leather will satisfy many shoppers' desires for style, ethics, and sustainability.

It's uncertain whether Modern Meadow will reduce the global footprint of current leather practices overall. Lee predicts that the company's biofabricated products will likely complement, rather than replace, existing materials. "I think it's a misnomer for people to assume that a 'new material' that enters the market is going to immediately, overnight, replace something that has been around for decades, centuries, millennia," she says. For example, "if you look at the 20th century, just because we invented nylon didn't make all the other materials go away. That's going to be the same for us."

Modern Meadow isn't the only company in hot pursuit of biofabricated leather. San Francisco-based startup Mycoworks, which raised its first round of funding last February, has also been working on a similar material using a mushroom substance called mycelium and other agricultural byproducts. In an even more bizarre application of technology, fashion designer Tina Gorjanc is even growing leather with the late Alexander McQueen's DNA using a method akin to Modern Meadow's.

Lee sees these prospective competitors as more partners in crime than possible threat. "What's exciting for us is just seeing a growing landscape of companies that are starting to biofabricate much more environmentally friendly materials that have amazing properties and are better for people and the planet," she says. "I mean, that's why we're all here."

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