News LETTER

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CONFEDERATION OF INDIAN TEXTILE INDUSTRY

News Highlights

Indian garment workers fight for justice after factory injuries

Welspun to market Egyptian Cotton products worldwide

Trump, trade and the future of the global textile industry

Yarns and Viscose Rayon Fibers Get Tangled in EU-U.S. Tariff Fight

Clothing brands need to pull at the threads of the apparel industry

Cotlook A Index (Cent/lb)	
03-02-2017	86.25
06-02-2017	85.75
07-02-2017	85.00
08-02-2017	84.65
08-02-2016	67.00
09-02-2015	68.85

New York Cotton Futures (Cents/lb) As on 09.02.2017	
Mar 2017	75.55
May 2017	76.65
July 2017	77.36

NATIONAL

Indian garment workers fight for justice after factory injuries

Textiles Ministry holding Stakeholders' Meeting of Silk Industry on Feb 10

Welspun to market Egyptian Cotton products worldwide

SRTEPC to participate in India promotion event in China

PHD Chamber and Regional Textile Commissioner's office jointly organising 'Textile Exhibition cum Buyer-Seller Meet (B2B)

GLOBAL

Trump, trade and the future of the global textile industry

Yarns and Viscose Rayon Fibers Get Tangled in EU-U.S. Tariff Fight

Pakistan : Delegation from Japan visits TDAP

Bangladesh Apparel Export Increases Miss Projected Growth

Pakistan : Collaboration - Trade with Azerbaijan needs to be stepped up

Myanmar to invite investment in textile & garment zone

Clothing brands need to pull at the threads of the apparel industry

International Summit on Textile Colouration to focus on sustainability

NATIONAL:

Indian garment workers fight for justice after factory injuries
(Source: Anuradha Nagaraj, Reuters, Daily Mail, February 09, 2017)

CHENNAI, India, Feb 9 (Thomson Reuters Foundation) - Rasu Mahalakshmi didn't celebrate when she received compensation for a factory accident that cost her four fingers. She had waited seven years for help and got just $2,000 for her life-changing injuries.

Her fight is far from over - and campaigners say her plight is typical in the country's textile industry.

"I lost my fingers, my livelihood and my confidence," Mahalakshmi told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

The garment worker was 19 when she was caught up in a mill accident in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu. It took until last December for Mahalakshmi, now 26, to get 136,000 Indian rupees ($2,000) from the government to cover her medical fees.

Her fight for a 500,000-rupee payment from the mill management goes on.

"They paid for the immediate surgery and the hospital stay but then forgot all about me," said Mahalakshmi.

"There were multiple visits to the doctor, medicines to be bought and bandages changed. I had to pay for all that."

Mahalakshmi was employed under the Sumangali scheme, a form of child labour where adolescent girls are hired for three to five years and promised a final lump sum to pay their wedding dowry. She was promised 30,000 rupees after three years.

SHOWN THE DOOR

Then the accident happened.

"One day I was suddenly shifted to work on a machine I was unfamiliar with," she said, recalling how her life changed forever when she switched machines.

Mahalakshmi said that when she approached managers with her parents and asked for compensation, they were "shown the door".

Money had already been deducted from Mahalakshmi's salary to pay for a state insurance scheme that should guarantee workers access to free medical treatment. Nor was she paid for the two years of labour that preceded her injury.

Campaigners say that factories are defaulting on their share of the scheme or paying only in part - meaning that her struggle for justice is the norm in India's $40 billion garment and textile industry.

NO WORK, NO PAY

Just as Mahalakshmi finally received her payout, another drama began, when a garment factory van overturned near the state capital of Chennai, injuring seamstress M. Muniyammal and 11 other people.

Two weeks after the accident, Muniyammal was back at a factory sewing machine, stitching clothes for global brands.

Her injuries had not healed and she suffered excruciating pain. But according to co-worker A. Nithya, she had no choice.

"Twelve of us were injured in the accident. We were told we would be compensated for the medical expenses and paid salaries only if we went back to work. She needed money," Nithya said.

Two months on, the women are fighting to have their bills reimbursed and hold on to their jobs.

Prema, who did not give her full name, injured her hand in the same accident as she travelled to work with her 6-year-old son. Prema said she had to go to the factory 10 times just to get her November salary.

The mill management denied the allegations.

"We are willing to pay them after they show us proper medical records," said a company representative, requesting anonymity.

"We have audits where we have to justify every expense. How can we pay them salaries if they don't come to work?"

BATTLELINES

For an estimated 45 million workers employed in India's garment and textile industry, battlelines are drawn each time there is a work-related injury, campaigners say.

"The accidents have a ripple effect on the entire family because in most cases, the woman is the only earning member," said Sujata Mody of the Garment and Fashion Workers' Union.

"In this case, the company had defaulted on paying its share of medical insurance, though they were deducting the workers' share from their salaries every month."

In 2016, Felix Jeyakumar - of non-profit Social Awareness and Voluntary Education - documented 13 accidents and eight deaths in factories in the "textile valley" of Tamil Nadu.

In every case, there were long deliberations with management over medical expenses and how much time off the injured could take without losing their money or their job, he said.

"In most cases, the managements try to pay a few thousand rupees and end the case," Jeyakumar told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. "Even in cases of death they don't take into account that often the woman is the only earning member of her family."

($1=67.175003 Indian rupees) (Reporting by Anuradha Nagaraj, Editing by Ed Upright and Lyndsay Griffiths. Please credit Thomson Reuters Foundation, the charitable arm of Thomson Reuters, that covers humanitarian news, women's rights, trafficking and climate change. Visit news.trust.org)

Home

Textiles Ministry holding Stakeholders' Meeting of Silk Industry on Feb 10
(Source: Knn India, February 09, 2017)

Textiles Ministry holding Stakeholders' Meeting of Silk Industry on Feb 10

New Delhi : The Ministry of Textiles is holding a stakeholders' meet of silk industry to seek inputs for the National Textile Policy, which is under finalization.

The meeting will be held on February 10, 2017 in the national capital in which other concerned Ministries would also participate.

The meet is being held at Constitution Club of India, New Delhi, and will be attended by nearly 150 delegates including seri-farmers, seed cocoon growers, Chawki rearing centres, reelers, Automatic Reeling Machine entrepreneurs, retailers and exporters (both form Mulberry and Vanya sectors), besides senior officers from various union ministries, State Sericulture Departments, Bankers, CSB, NABARD, NIFT & NID.

The meet is being organized by the Central Silk Board and will deliberate on the present status, plans, programmes and challenges ahead in the silk sector, and inter-ministerial issues, in order to bring about better synergy to ensure sustained development of the Indian silk industry. It is expected that the outcome of the Stakeholders' meet will provide useful inputs for the National Textile Policy, which is under finalization.

Union Textiles Minister Smriti Zubin Irani will preside over the meeting. Minister of State, Textiles, Ajay Tamta; Secretary, Textiles, Rashmi Verma and Chairman, Central Silk Board, K.M. Hanumantharayappa will be present at the Meeting.

Union Finance Minister, Arun Jaitley; Union Minister of Agriculture, Radha Mohan Singh; Union Minister for Science & Technology, Dr. Harsh Vardhan; Union Minister for Rural Development, Panchayat Raj and Drinking Water & Sanitation, Narendra Singh Tomar; and Union Minister of State (I/C), Environment, Forests & Climate Change, Anil Madhav Dave have been invited to grace the occasion.

Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha), Bhagalpur, Bihar, Ashwini Kumar Choubey; Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha), Gorantla, Anantapur, Andhra Pradesh, Nimmala Kristappa; Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha), Mysuru, Pratap Simha; Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha), Akola, Maharashtra, Sanjay Dattray; and Member of Parliament, Lok Sabha, Mangaldoi, Assam, Ramen Deka, are also expected to participate.

Home

Welspun to market Egyptian Cotton products worldwide

(Source: Fibre2Fashion, February 09, 2019)

Courtesy: Cotton Egypt Association

Welspun India Ltd has entered into a cooperation agreement with Cotton Egypt Association to promote and market Egyptian Cotton products worldwide. The agreement will help enhance the complete supply chain of the Egyptian Cotton starting from cultivation to the final product, which will also benefit the Egyptian farmer and the industry as a whole.

After verifying Welspun's quality and supply chain reliability processes, the Cotton Egypt Association has granted the company the right to use the Egyptian Cotton logo for five years until 2022. The two organisations will now work together to create programmes for promotion of Egyptian Cotton logo in the retail markets across the globe.

Welspun will invest a sum of $3 million in a stage wise manner over the next few years to support the joint initiatives.

“The sheer nature of Egyptian Cotton makes it a luxury to be cherished by all. Welspun wants the world to know about Egyptian cotton and we want to help promote it among the consumers and the makers alike. Welspun will help create marketing programmes and execute them using its extensive global network,” explained Dipali Goenka, CEO and joint MD, Welspun India.

Welspun is also exploring options for expansion of its Egypt operations to include a manufacturing facility for Egyptian Cotton home textile products. “We foresee an increase in demand for Egyptian Cotton and find an ideal condition for making Egypt one of our hubs for sourcing and manufacturing Egyptian Cotton products. We’re looking at the best option to utilise this opportunity,” added Goenka.

Widely regarded as an innovations driven company, Welspun India Ltd has filed for 27 global patents of which nine have already been granted. Apart from revamping its Christy brand to make it youth-friendly, Welspun is also increasing its global footprint with new stores in the US, China, Middle East and in the UK and working on increasing its associations similar to Wimbledon and Rugby World Cup.

The Cotton Egypt Association, established by the Egyptian ministry of industry and foreign trade and Alexandria Cotton Exporters Association, is mandated to manage, promote and protect the Egyptian Cotton and the Egyptian Cotton Logo worldwide. (RKS)

Home

SRTEPC to participate in India promotion event in China

(Source: Fibre2Fashion, February 09, 2017)

The Synthetic & Rayon Textiles Export Promotion Council (SRTEPC) has announced that it will be participating in the India promotion event to be held in Canton Tower in Guangzhou, China on March 11, 2017. Various Indian community organisations and businesses will participate in this Indian mela, which is being organised on a large scale.

The event will have an exclusive pavilion to promote Indian handicrafts item and a fashion show will be held to showcase high-end Indian textile products.

SRTEPC has called on its members to take advantage of this opportunity and participate in the event. The council has requested its members to showcase their products and support the event by providing samples of select items of textiles, garments and handicrafts for displaying them during the event, according to a press note.

The event will also have cultural events, Indian tourism promotion booths, lucky draws, Indian food stalls and much more.

The council has played a transforming role over the years, inculcating export culture and promoting exports of Indian man-made fibre (MMF) and textiles. Exports of these items, which were negligible in the 1960s, have grown substantially to touch $6.16 billion during 2013-14. India exports to nearly 140 countries at present.

The council envisages exports to the tune of $9 billion by the end of the 12th Five Year Plan (2016-17). The MMF textiles industry contributes 17 per cent of the total Indian textile exports and this share is growing. India is the sixth largest exporter of MMF textiles in the world. (KD)

Home

PHD Chamber and Regional Textile Commissioner's office jointly organising 'Textile Exhibition cum Buyer-Seller Meet (B2B)

(Source: PHD Chamber, January 31, 2017)

PHD Chamber in association with O/o Regional Textile Commissioner, Noida, Ministry of Textiles, Government of India is organising 'Textile Exhibition cum Buyer-Seller Meet (B2B)' from 10th-12th February 2017 at Trade Facilitation Centre, Bada Lalpur, Varanasi. The Chamber expects visitors in large numbers to be present and extend their network with quality suppliers and business partners. Visitors could also avail benefits from the products on display in the Exhibition cum Buyer Seller Meet.

There is no Registration Fee for Buyers. PHD is also providing 2 night accommodation along with half day city tour of Varanasi to approved and registered buyers. However, prior registration is necessary.

Exhibition stalls are also being provided at the venue at special discounted rate of Rs.12000/- + Service Tax (for 3 days).

Those interested can get in touch with Subhashish.gaur@phdcci.in or Mob: 9711395603.

The Key features of Textile Exhibition cum B2B Meet are:

- *Suggest interventions in the Textile sector with focus on powerloom products for increasing the domestic manufacturing thereby decreasing the import burdens while looking at the export potential.*
- *3 days Exhibition cum B2B Meet*
- *Industry and Government delegations.*
- *Face to face Buyer Seller interaction and Negotiations.*
- *Creating a platform for exhibiting latest products, trends and technologies related to Textiles.*

Exhibitor benefits:

- *Focused Exhibition on Textiles*
- *One to one B2B interactions*
- *Increasing Brand Awareness*
- *Opportunity to increase market share*
- *Business networking and generation of leads*
- *Displaying of latest products*
- *Joint Venture, Collaboration and Investment Opportunities*
- *A gathering consisting of senior officials of Government of India, diplomats, CEOs and top officials from the technical textile companies from India and abroad.*

Visitor benefits:

- *Latest products and design on display.*
- *Opportunity with Quality Suppliers and business partners.*
- *Range of Varanasi Silk products on display.*
- *Face to Face interaction with manufacturers*
- *and bulk sellers.*

Home

GLOBAL:

Trump, trade and the future of the global textile industry

(Source: Simone Preuss, FashionUnited, February 09, 2017)

In view of Brexit, the change in the US presidency, the US withdrawal from TPP and other events, the global textile and garment industry has had its fair share of politics influencing day-to-day operations lately. This is why Kingpins, the international boutique denim sourcing show, broadcast an expert panel discussion titled "Live: Kingpins Goes to DC: Trump, Trade and the Future of the Global Textile Industry" to explore the intersection between government and the textile and fashion industries.

The first episode in a planned series of discussions on the challenges and opportunies facing the textile and apparel industries was streamed live from Washington, DC in partnership with just-style at 10 am EST on 9th February 2017 and focused on what the current political climate has in store for the global and US denim and apparel industry. Panelists were Julia K. Hughes, president of the United States Fashion Industry Association (USFIA), and Augustine Tantillo, president and chief executive of the National Council of Textile Organizations (NCTO). Robert Antoshak, managing director of Olah Inc., hosted the discussion.

While speaking about the recent changes in the US textile and fashion industry and President Donald Trump's support of manufacturing in the United States, Hughes pointed out that jobs are created by trade and that offshore manufacturing supports jobs in the US as well. Tantillo countered by stating that 60-65 billion US dollars of the industry's output are produced in the US. "It is good to have an administration that acknowledges a baseline interest in nurturing it," he said, confirming that "our commitment is here."

Yarn forward rule: boon or bane?

Asked about trade agreements like NAFTA and if updates were needed, Hughes considered updates in general a good idea but cautioned against certain points, for example taxes on goods for Mexico or changing things that work in the international supply chain. Tantillo pointed to the 'yarn forward rule of origin' (which determines that the yarn used to form the fabric must originate in a NAFTA country) as a "great success" but cautioned that its benefits should go to signatory countries and not to non-signatories like China for example.

Hughes added a different perspective: "While there are US companies that are successful because of the yarn forward rule...it also holds back the western hemisphere supply chain because it is not nimble", pointing to those products outside of Mexico and Canada that are currently not available in the supply chain, thus holding back US manufacturers.

Asked if trade relations would suffer in terms of possible re-negotiations between Mexico, Canada and the US and a potentially tough policy towards China, Hughes pointed to the fact that currently 41 percent of industry imports come from China. "China is important and it is interesting that the current administration has not taken any action against China yet", Hughes stated.

Tantillo countered by pointing to the many problems when doing business with China, from intellectual property issues to subsidies, an undervaluation of the currency and production techniques that are unacceptable in the western hemisphere in terms of workers' lives and environmental protection. "It is refreshing to have finally have someone say that China has made a tremendous impact but question if they got their fairly or if they are maintaining that market share through fair and balanced practices," he said.

Is TPP dead?

In terms of the TPP, both panelists agreed that though the TPP may not be dead yet, it "is in a very deep hibernation at this point and may not come out of it"; a "Friday-the-13th kind of existence" as Tantillo put it. He pointed out that most countries already have a bi-lateral trade agreement with the US, while TPP members like Japan, Vietnam and Malaysia do not and may not make good candidates, as on the other hand Japan and possibly Great Britain would. According to Hughes, the US needs to be engaged and be aware of so many trade agreements that are already there. "We don't want to be left behind; we need to stay a global country," she said.

Last but not least, managing editor of just-style, Leonie Barrie, submitted the question how companies in the industry should deal with the current uncertainty. "My advice right now: be calm," said Hughes. "What can we do with our sourcing strategy? Store closings are affecting us, what's the impact of e-commerce? ... We need to stay calm, don't jump on behalf of a tweet," she advised. "Be as good as you can be in terms of innovation and product quality," added Tantillo.

Photos: Kingpins Livestream, from left to right: Julia Hughes, Auggie Tantillo, Robert Antoshak

Home

Yarns and Viscose Rayon Fibers Get Tangled in EU-U.S. Tariff Fight
(Source: Deborah Belgum, Apparel News, February 09, 2017)

DOMESTIC IMPACT: U.S. knitting mills, fiber makers and yarn spinners—such as Texollini in Long Beach, Calif.;—could see the price of inputs rise for man-made cellulosic fibers such as Modal and rayon if the proposed tariffs go into effect.

Lenzing Fibers Inc. in Mobile, Ala.

Buhler Quality Yarns in Jefferson, Ga.

A trade war over Europe limiting U.S. beef imports led the Obama administration last year to propose a set of retaliatory tariffs on mostly food-related goods coming from Europe. But two items that fell under the retaliatory tariff proposal were textiles: viscose rayon staple fibers as well as Modal fibers, not carded or combed or otherwise processed for spinning, and single yarns containing 85 percent or more by weight of artificial staple fibers coming from Europe.

The proposed 100 percent retaliatory tariffs have left U.S. textile makers worried that new measures could increase their raw-material costs and push up the price of fabrics made from rayon and Modal. Lyocell fiber, also known as Tencel, is not included under the proposed tariffs.

The U.S. Trade Representative's office, which was taking comments on the tariffs until Jan. 30, is now holding a hearing on the issue in Washington, D.C., Feb. 15–16 and then will take post-hearing rebuttal comments until Feb. 22.

The tariffs have plenty of people worried because 41 percent of the viscose rayon fiber imported into the United States in 2015 came from Europe, translating into $72 million of fiber. Currently, the tariff on viscose rayon staple fiber is 4.3 percent and for yarn it is 9 percent.

"Imposition of an additional 100 percent tariff would be highly disruptive to the supply chain and harm U.S. competitiveness of rayon fiber-containing products," said Auggie Tantillo, president and chief executive of the National Council of Textile Organizations, which wrote a letter to the U.S. Trade Representative opposing the tariffs.

"Production of rayon fiber is nonexistent in the United States because it is very environmentally difficult to produce. It is still made in Europe and in Asia—mainly China. We are totally dependent on off-shore sources for rayon fiber, and therefore we deem any penalty tariff on that product to have adverse ramifications for U.S. manufacturers," Tantillo added.

In his letter to the government, the head of NCTO pointed out that at least 10 U.S. companies belonging to his textile group import viscose rayon staple fiber from the European Union. They said that additional tariffs would place an undue burden on their businesses and potentially lead to lost sales and hurt employment.

One company that would be affected by the tariff is Lenzing Fibers Inc. in Mobile, Ala. The company already produces Tencel fibers, the brand name for lyocell, at its Alabama factory. But it has plans to invest $293 million in a new fiber plant capable of producing 90,000 tons of Tencel fiber a year.

For that new fiber plant, the company was planning to import viscose rayon staple fibers from its plant in Austria to blend with its lyocell staple fibers made in the United States to make nonwoven products such as baby wipes. “An increase in duties on viscose would have a material negative effect on the business case for this new announced investment,” wrote John Patterson, the chief financial officer for Lenzing Fibers Inc.

China is a major producer of viscose rayon staple fiber. In 2015, about 50 percent of the viscose rayon staple fiber imported into the United States came from China. “Should penalty tariffs be levied on imports from the EU, the clear winner would be China,” the NCTO pointed out in its letter to the U.S. Trade Representative.

Another company that would be impacted is Buhler Quality Yarns Corp., a Swiss company with U.S. headquarters in Georgia. In its U.S. factory, it manufactures yarns from Supima extra-long staple cotton, MicroModal Edelweiss and MicroTencel.

“We are going to have to look at other fibers we can sustain if this goes forward,” said David Sasso, vice president of international sales at Buhler. “The biggest fiber we buy is Supima, and our second-largest fiber consumption is in Modal. We need to provide yarns at a garment price point that people are looking for.”

If the proposed tariffs go into effect, the price of Tencel yarns would become more attractive because its fiber content wouldn’t be subject to added tariffs.

At Texollini, a knitting mill that makes stretch fabrics at its Long Beach, Calif., factory, there would be added costs that could not be avoided. “There are no rayon fiber factories or rayon yarn factories used in the textile industry in this country,” said Dmitry Konstantinovsky, the chief information officer and purchasing manager at Texollini. “So we are basically forced to use imported products. All these tariffs just increase the cost of our inputs and make our products more expensive and less competitive with our competitors in Europe and Asia.”

This trade dispute started in 1998 when the EU lost a case at the World Trade Organization for banning American beef. In 2009, the U.S. negotiated an agreement to allow a small degree of market access for specially produced beef that meets the EU’s standards, but that agreement did not work as intended, said the office of the U.S. Trade Representative, which resulted in this retaliatory proposal.

Home

Pakistan : Delegation from Japan visits TDAP

(Source: Daily Mail, February 10, 2017)

Daily Times

A delegation from ITOCHU Corporation, Japan visited TDAP and had a meeting with Secretary TDAP. The delegation was headed by Mr.Toru Hisabayashi, General Manager, ITOCHU Corporation. During the meeting the GM, ITOCHU gave a detailed presentation about the Textile Revolution -Stable Cotton Supply, Longer Fiber and Diversification of textile products. They suggested the production of longer stable fiber to be able to produce fine yarn. The fine yarn can produce many varieties of fabric to diversify the garment inddustry as currently Pakistan is only producing short staple length cotton. The case of Indian cotton production - which has been doubled- was also discussed.

Secretary TDAP appreciated the proposal and stated that TDAP and other government organizations i.e. Ministry of Textile Industries and Ministry of National Food Security and Research will take steps to produce high yield hybrid seed having insect resistance and long staple length cotton.

Home

Bangladesh Apparel Export Increases Miss Projected Growth

(Source: Caletha Crawford, Sourcing Journal online, February 09, 2017)

Bangladesh export earnings continue to be fueled by the country's ready-made garment industry, which typically accounts for 80 percent of its export receipts.

Garment exports reached $2.7 billion, up 3.05% in January, year on year, and 4.65% month on month, according to RMG Bangladesh. Overall Bangladesh exports (including garments) rose 4 percent to $3.31 billion dollars last month, compared to January 2016, and exports increased 6.43% from December to January though earnings missed the $3.40 billion target.

For the first seven months of the fiscal year, garment exports hit $16.41 billion, which was a 4.12% year on year increase. However, the number fell short of the $17.28 billion earnings target. For the same period, total exports (including garments) reached $20.11 billion, a 4.36% increase over the same period the previous year.

Garment exports to the U.S., the country's largest importer, slid 1.49% to $5.11 billion from January to November 2016. The sector saw a 5.19% drop in exports to the U.K., it's third largest importer, in the first six months of the fiscal year.

To achieve the sector's export target of $50 billion by 2021, more than 12.25% export growth is needed every year.

Also to reach those earnings goals, the country will need address recent labor concerns, which could threaten its trade status with key players like Europe.

Recently, the IndustriALL Global Union, UNI Global Union and the International Trade Union Confederation labor unions have urged the EU to reconsider Bangladesh's free trade status following government and factory actions in retaliation for workers' minimum wage demands.

In December, workers went on strike to demand higher wages. Instead, more than 1,500 were fired, 600 were met with criminal charges and 11 workers and labor union representatives were jailed.

The labor unions say this treatment along with the slow progress in improving working conditions violates Bangladesh's eligibility under the EU's Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) program.

The response to the strike also prompted the American Apparel and Footwear Association to issue an official plea for Bangladesh to institute a regular and transparent wage review system in order for the country to continue to enjoy a healthy relationship with its member brands.

Home

Pakistan : Collaboration - Trade with Azerbaijan needs to be stepped up

(Source: PPI, The Express Tribune. February 10, 2017)

ISLAMABAD: Azerbaijan Ambassador Ali Alizada has said that bilateral trade with Pakistan spiked three times in 2016, but a lot more potential still existed for making improvements.

He said this while accompanying a 16-company delegation of Azerbaijan, led by Export and Investment Promotion Foundation Vice Chairman Yousif Abdullah, which visited the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) to discuss and explore opportunities of business collaboration.

Alizada emphasised that the leadership of both countries was determined to forge strong trade and economic relations, which was reaffirmed during the visit of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Commerce Minister Khurram Dastgir to Azerbaijan last year.

He voiced hope that the Azerbaijan delegation's trip to Pakistan would help in exploring new areas of mutual cooperation.

The delegation represented varying sectors including oil and gas, steel, transport, food processing, farming, trade, packaging and paper, fruits and vegetables, milk and dairy products, chocolate, hospitality, furniture, cosmetics, mineral water, cotton and others.

Yousif Abdullah declared that many companies of Azerbaijan were interested in doing business with Pakistan. "The purpose of their sojourn is to study Pakistan's market and explore opportunities of business collaboration in agriculture and other fields," he said.

Azerbaijan offers incentives to foreign investors and provides a seven-year tax holiday for investment in the Industrial and Technology Park.

Earlier, ICCI Senior Vice President Khalid Malik said bilateral trade was not up to the desired level and Pakistan could export readymade garments, cotton products, engineering and consumer goods, pharmaceuticals, rice, textile fabrics and other products.

Home

Myanmar to invite investment in textile & garment zone

(Source: Fibre2Fashion, February 09, 2017)

The Myanmarese ministry of industry will invite both local and foreign investment to develop a specialised textile and garment zone in Shwe Taung, Bano region. The ministry is currently conducting feasibility study with a Japanese company to utilise 127 acres land of No.1 Garment Factory in Shwe Taung for setting up the special textile and garment zone.

The proposed zone will manufacture high quality products, Myanmarese media reported quoting Union industry minister Khin Maung Cho. The development work on the 127-acre land will begin once the feasibility study is completed.

The special textile and apparel zone will result in job generation for local people living in Shaw Taung, and would also contribute to the country's economic growth.

Meanwhile, the Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC) has suggested that apparel stitching factories be set up in Ponnakyun, Sittwe in a bid to create job opportunities for local people and also stop migration.

MIC has recommended several fiscal incentives for companies interested in starting projects in Sittwe, to encourage investment in a less developed region. The proposed incentives include an income tax exemption for seven years and exemption on customs duties and local taxes, on import of raw materials and partially manufactured goods. The relaxation of duties and taxes would be for those companies, who import raw materials to export finished goods.

The state owned investment body has also recommended that an apparel manufacturing facility be built by a public company, in cooperation with an existing garment factory.

There are over 400 apparel manufacturing units in Myanmar, employing over 300,000 people. Japan is the largest importer of apparel from Myanmar, accounting for 33 per cent of all clothing exports. In addition, Myanmar also exports to South Korea, Germany, China and the American markets. (RKS)

Home

Clothing brands need to pull at the threads of the apparel industry

(Source: Mary Hable, Greenbiz, February 09, 2017)

ShutterstockGregory Johnston

Industry-level change may be the way to go because brand level sustainability solutions often do not provide enough of a direct economic payback to be systemic or sustainable. This story was first published by Ensia.

In 2010, fresh out of college with a degree in economics, I began a new job as a corporate sustainability professional at a major apparel retailer. I was hopeful. The apparel industry was full of environmental problems and opportunities for major progress.

At the time, Greenpeace had launched a detox campaign directly linking textile manufacturing and water pollution, a claim confirmed by the industry's most influential brands through their organization of Zero Discharge of Hazardous Chemicals. The Natural Resources Defense Council was building its Clean by Design (PDF) initiative to collaborate with brands that wanted cost-effective ways to clean up factories in their supply chains. The Sustainable Apparel Coalition was gearing up to foster collaboration among companies, non-governmental organizations, government and academia with the mission of improving the social and environmental performance across the industry. And corporate sustainability departments were being built across the industry.

After five years in the field, I'm no longer looking for sustainability solutions to be created within companies.

The problems and opportunities were obvious, but one big thing was missing: Consumers were not clearly rewarding brands for sustainability. Without such an economic payback, brands lacked incentives to develop and deploy systemic sustainability initiatives and so limited themselves to less expensive short-term changes. As a result, after five years in the field, I'm no longer looking for sustainability solutions to be created within companies. Rather, my view is that the more effective role for brands is to invest in external industry-wide sustainability research and technology aimed at developing those systemic solutions.

To drive investment, industry should track contributions from each company and share the information with consumers. Consumers then could use this information to judge — and reward — brands' commitment to sustainability. After all, money, unlike environmental impact, is something we already know how to measure well, making sustainability investment a simple metric that can be used to activate consumer choices now.

Wanted: Systemic solutions

On the surface, the sustainability teams I was part of made progress. We found ways to achieve grassroots improvements despite minimal top-down support. At one company, we persuaded executives from design and sourcing to come together to educate each other about sustainability issues and to study what competitors were doing. At another large retailer, management was motivated to invest in energy efficiency and renewable energy, saving money that was used to fund other sustainability projects, such as corporate reporting and more internal education.

These successes, unfortunately, were far outweighed by missed opportunities. For years, we cycled through conversations on using recycled, natural and organic fibers without seeing change. We researched and piloted take-back and donation programs that didn't gain traction. We developed strict supply chain monitoring programs, but couldn't get key decision-makers to sign off on the next step of including sustainability expectations in business agreements. Ultimately, I watched both sustainability teams that I was a part of downsized.

This wasn't surprising. An apparel brand's fundamental purpose is to sell product, not to promote organic agriculture or develop non-toxic fibers and finishes.

To be sure, a handful of values-driven apparel companies have experimented with technologies such as greener chemistry, waterless dyeing and natural and organic fibers. But those companies are the minority because such changes are either too costly or risk reducing product performance in the eyes of the consumer. Material choices create the products that are the lifeblood of a brand. Any changes need to be made out of confidence, rooted in strong evidence. Currently, brands lack the data needed to make evidence-based changes.

The bottom line is: Individual apparel industry brands won't deploy systemic solutions on their own.

On material recycling, it was also clear that apparel brands acting on their own couldn't effectively "close the loop" on clothes and shoes at the end of their useful life. A robust take-back and recycling program turns a store into a hub of reverse logistics, collecting and sending materials back to a facility that sorts, resells or down-cycles material. All of this takes the store's focus away from the goal of selling product and creates projects that provide little or no economic payback.

The bottom line is: Individual apparel industry brands won't deploy systemic solutions on their own because such solutions are not developed enough to provide either a direct economic payback or an indirect payback through consumer reward for more sustainable choices.

Investment as a metric

Brands will make voluntary investments in sustainability only if consumers clearly reward them for doing so. The problem is, even caring consumers do not have the information they need to know what to reward.

Providing consumers with that information is a fundamental pursuit of the Sustainable Apparel Coalition. Since 2009, the SAC has been developing the Higg Index, essentially a sustainability version of a nutrition label.

Over the past three months, the SAC has released two important pieces of the Higg Index: The Design and Development Module; and the Materials Sustainability Index. The goal of these tools is to provide consumers and brand designers with information they can use to easily compare varying degrees of environmental impact between products.

To measure and ultimately reduce environmental impact, the Higg Index depends on a vast amount of quantitative data grounded in science. For example, it needs to be able to provide a simple recommendation as to whether a 90 percent recycled polyester blend or a 50 percent organic cotton blend is the more sustainable choice. Currently, the Higg Index is not complete enough to make such a recommendation.

Brands can have a more impactful role in advancing sustainability by contributing to an industry fund that supports these initiatives.

For a tool such as the Higg Index to reduce environmental impact, the industry needs more sustainable technologies and better ways to measure the benefits they provide. What the industry needs now more than anything is a consistent source of funds to develop those data and technologies, such as research and development leading to new fiber and manufacturing technology.

Brands can have a more impactful role in advancing sustainability by contributing to an industry fund that supports these initiatives. Providing simple information on individual brands' contributions to the fund as a percent of revenue can drive consumer choices and, consequently, competition between brands on investments.

Reprioritizing expectations

The downsizing of corporate sustainability positions that I experienced could be a sign that brands are moving away from investing in internal sustainability initiatives. Given the complexity of the issues, that makes sense. Brands don't need more people working on sustainability. What is needed is financial investment in systemic solutions related to fiber, chemical and manufacturing research and technology.

Brands can't create these systemic solutions on their own, but they can help pay for them on an industry level. Providing information to consumers about brands' investment in industry-wide sustainability would give consumers a powerful tool for making purchases based on sustainability, which would motivate the apparel industry to take action toward reducing its environmental impact.

Editor's note: Mary Hable produced this feature as a participant in the Ensia Mentor Program. Her mentor for the project was Marc Gunther.

Home

International Summit on Textile Colouration to focus on sustainability

(Source: Innovations in Textiles, February 09, 2017)

Organised by SDC International, a leading independent, educational charity dedicated to advancing the science and technology of colour worldwide, the International Summit on Textile Coloration 2017 will take place on 8 March, in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

The conference will bring together textile colourists, buyers, retailers, garment producers, academicians and researchers from around the world to discuss technical innovations and green initiatives in the textile coloration industry.

Scope

The event will tackle some of the difficult questions around technical innovation and environmental sustainability within the textile coloration industry.

The event will consist of three sessions:

- *Compliance in Colour Management*
- *Compliance in Textile Coloration*
- *Compliance in Fashion*

The conference will help visitors meet the people who are driving the change; get to know the people who have used the new innovations, and learn the path to a better world of coloration. Some of the questions that will be answered during the summit include: What's the way ahead? Who will pay for the increased cost of sustainability? Is fashion the most polluting industry? How toxic are the clothes that I buy? How organic is organic?

Industry challenges

"The world is changing fast," say organisers. "Colourists have to recognise the challenge and face it squarely." Some of the factors affecting the industry is the growing demand on behalf of retailers and brand owners for the best performance at ever decreasing prices.

Eco norm also continue to change frequently, placing the colourists under pressure and arguably introducing trade barriers. The cost of natural resources and labour are also increasing worldwide with consequential impacts on margins in static or decreasing prices markets.

Finally, challenges include unsold retail inventories, and increasingly turbulent global markets, with the emergence of online selling channels.

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Home
