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Australia invests US\$100m in advanced fibre centre

By **Dr Seshadri Ramkumar, Texas Tech University**

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Cotton, wool, nanofibres, carbon fibres and composites research get a research boost.

The Australian government and collaborators are to invest US\$100m over a period of three years to set up Australian Future Fibres Research and Innovation Centre (AFFRIC) at the Deakin University campus in Geelong, Australia. The funding period is for July 2010 to June 2013. Geelong is located 70km south west of Melbourne, Australia.

The Australian government will provide a total of US\$37m through its educational investment fund. AFFRIC is also receiving funding support from Deakin University, Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), the Victoria Centre for Advanced Material Manufacturing and the Victoria state government.

At the American Association of Textile Chemists and Colorists (AATCC) conference in Charleston, South Carolina on March 24, Professor Xungai Wang, director of the Centre for Material and Fibre Innovation at Deakin University said the US\$100m is for capital equipment and infrastructure for the new centre. According to Dr Wang, the new centre will transform the fibre and composite industry in Australia.

The centre has already started functioning with Phase-I funding of US\$10m. The AFFRIC will focus on four primary areas: carbon fibres and composites, nanofibre technology, green natural fibres and functional fibrous materials.

The multi-million dollar funding will allow two new buildings to be built on Deakin's Waurin Ponds campus in Geelong, alongside its current Centre for Material and Fibre Innovation. Research at this centre has received the highest score of five in the recently released national report on research excellence in Australia.

Cotton and wool fibre research will be performed within the research platform of natural fibres, said Dr Wang. Recently, in addition to the US\$100m, Deakin University has provided additional US\$3m to recruit scientists to work on projects.

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