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Indian investments – the reality

Dr Seshadri Ramkumar discusses the new investments in technical textiles and nonwovens in India

After a number of years in discussion, the Government of India officially launched Technological Mission on Technical Textiles (TMTT) on January 20, in an event jointly organised by the Ministry of Textiles and the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) in New Delhi. This national programme puts India on a pedestal as, to my understanding, no other country has created such a nationally significant mission to boost the growth of value-added textiles. The national project is mission-oriented and is aimed at imparting practical knowledge in speciality textiles and provides marketing support for entrepreneurs.

Rapid growth

In India, the technical textiles sector is estimated to grow at a rate of 10-11%, whereas, globally, the growth is estimated at 3-4%. The growth in India has happened predominantly due to the efforts of the Indian government for the past five years. I was privileged to be part of the early efforts and awareness programmes conducted by the Ministry of Textiles in India in 2005. Ever since, the government has supported a number of awareness programmes and workshops throughout India from national and international trade bodies and institutes, such as the US-based Association of the



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Nonwoven Fabrics Industry (INDA), Brussels-based EDANA, the European nonwovens industry association and FICCI.

The government-sponsored awareness programmes and other related conferences by INDA, Texas Tech University and FICCI have generated general understanding and awareness on nonwovens and speciality textiles. The need for diversification of the cotton spinning and garment sectors into value-added segments is now well understood by the stakeholders. This has been possible due to the plethora of training workshops, seminars and conferences on technical textiles.

The newly-launched mission now aims to address issues of practical know-how and marketing.

The next stage

TMTT has a budget outlay of Rs 200 crores (US\$ 43.9 million) for a period of five years (2010/11 to 2014/15) and has two mini-

missions. Mini-mission I is aimed at boosting the know-how on technical textiles via different means. According to the government, the objectives of mini-mission I include standardisation, creating common testing facilities, indigenous development of prototypes and resource centres with IT infrastructure. Mini-mission II supports market development activities.

Under Mini mission I, the Indian government will establish four Centres of Excellence (CoEs) which will focus on nonwovens, composites, indutech and sporttech. Each centre will have a maximum allocation of Rs 24.5 crores (US\$ 5.4 million). Each will have a ceiling of Rs 20 crores (US\$ 4.4 million) for capital equipment, Rs 2 crores (US\$ 0.4 million) for training facilities and Rs 3 crores (US\$ 0.7 million) towards recurring expenses for employing scientists and consultants over a period of three years.

Hits and misses

- 1) Prioritising technical textiles by forming a national mission is an important milestone in the growth of the technical textiles sector in India.
- 2) India has taken a leadership role in creating the mission.
- 3) The mission has rightly emphasised practical know-how and marketing.
- 4) TMMT is creating awareness and interest among stakeholders,

which will boost this sector's growth.

TMTT at this present stage has overlooked two important sectors - converting and chemical finishes. So far, the Indian government has emphasised the importance of product-based centres such as agrotexiles, protective textiles, geotextiles, medical textiles, sporttech and indutech. Only through the TMTT, the government has realised the need for process-oriented centres such as nonwovens and composites. It is important to enhance the technical know-how on processes which can be used to develop speciality textiles. Such an endeavour is important to create more opportunities in the technical textiles sector. In the next phase of TMTT, the government should emphasise the importance of process oriented-centres as a means of diversifying the textile industry.

Overall, launching the TMTT is of great significance to the Indian textiles industry. Developing the converting sector that can create more small and medium-sized enterprises should be an important task and it seems that the converting sector will be the engine for job creation and will grow the Indian textile industry.

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