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India's Technical Textiles Mission: a new reality

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After a few years in discussion and decision making, on Jan. 20th the government of India officially launched the Technological Mission on Technical Textiles (TMTT) in an event jointly organized by the **Ministry of Textiles** and the **Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI)** in New Delhi. With the creation of this national program, no other country has fostered such a nationally significant mission to boost the growth of value-added textiles. This national project is mission oriented, aimed at imparting practical knowledge in specialty textiles and providing marketing support for entrepreneurs.

Technical textiles in India

The technical textiles sector is estimated to grow at an annual rate of 10-11 percent in India; globally, the growth is estimated at 3-4 percent. The industry's growth in India is due in significant part to the efforts of its government for the past five years. I was privileged to be part of the early efforts and awareness programs conducted by the Ministry of Textiles in 2005. Since then, the government has supported a number of awareness programs and workshops throughout India. Many national and international trade organizations have been playing an important role in creating greater awareness and developing international linkages to boost the growth of the nonwovens and specialty fabrics industry, including: the U.S.-based **Association of the Nonwoven Fabrics Industry (INDA)**, the Brussels-based **European Disposables and Nonwovens Association (EDANA)**, along with FICCI.

Texas Tech University, based in Lubbock, Texas, U.S.A., began its efforts in India in 2004, and I worked hard with them to create an international conference to foster and communicate more knowledge in technical textiles. The conference HPTEX-2004 was developed as a collaborative endeavor between Texas Tech University and the Coimbatore-based **Kumaraguru College of Technology**. The conference attracted many international experts in the field of advanced textiles and paved the way for further awareness programs in technical textiles in South India. The conference is now a recognized event in the industry, known as "Advances in Textiles, Machinery, Nonwovens & Technical textiles," commonly referred to as ATNT.

International awareness

In 2006, I had the privilege of inviting Mr. Ian Butler, responsible for industry statistics at INDA, to India to speak at the conference. When he made his presentation, his estimate on India's nonwoven roll goods production was approximately 30,000 to 40,000

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metric tons. India's roll goods nonwoven production now stands at more than 100,000 metric tons; production has tripled in three years. Within the year, INDA officially organized its first ever nonwovens workshop in Mumbai in January 2007, with more than 200 participants. I have been tutoring the INDA nonwovens training workshops in India since then; Bangalore-based TecniTex Nonwovens Pvt. Ltd. offers these training programs with license from INDA. Fifteen workshops have been offered in various cities such as Mumbai, Coimbatore, Surat, Bangalore and Kolkata.

Government-sponsored awareness programs and other related conferences by INDA, Texas Tech University and FICCI have increased general understanding and awareness on nonwovens and specialty textiles. The need for diversification of the cotton spinning and garment sectors into value-added segments is now well understood by the stakeholders. What is needed now? Timely and useful knowledge on both practical know-how and marketing.

Technological Mission on Technical Textiles

TMTT, budgeted for a period of five years, has two mini-missions. Mini-mission I is aimed at boosting industry know-how on technical textiles through a number of objectives: standardization, creating common testing facilities, and indigenous development of prototypes and resource centers with I.T. infrastructure. Mini-mission II supports market development activities. Under Mini-mission I, the government of India will establish four Centers of Excellence (CoEs) which will focus on: 1) Nonwovens; 2) Composites; 3) Indutech; and 4) Sportech. Each center will have budgeted amounts for capital equipment, training facilities and recurring expenses for employing scientists and consultants over a period of three years.

Prioritizing technical textiles by forming a national mission is an important milestone in the growth of the technical textiles sector in India. The government's leadership role in creating the mission, putting emphasis on practical knowledge transfer and marketing, is creating significant awareness and interest among international stakeholders, which will boost this industry sector's growth to higher levels.

Although the TMTT is a positive step, it is also necessary to put emphasis on two more aspects of the technical textiles sector: the converting sector, and chemical finishes and applications. TMTT currently has no emphasis on these two important sectors. The Indian government has emphasized the importance on product-based centers such as agrotexiles, protective textiles, geotextiles, medical textiles, sportech and indutech; and now, through TMTT, has realized the need for process-oriented centers such as nonwovens and composites. In the next phase of TMTT, the government should emphasize the importance of process-oriented centers as a means of diversifying the textile industry. These industry sectors will be engines for job creation in more small- and medium-sized enterprises.

Source: [Texas Tech University](#)

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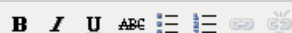
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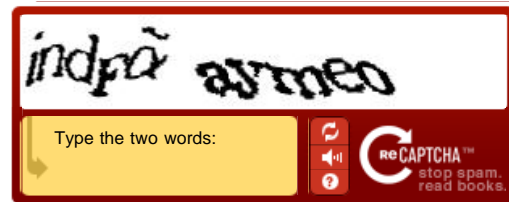
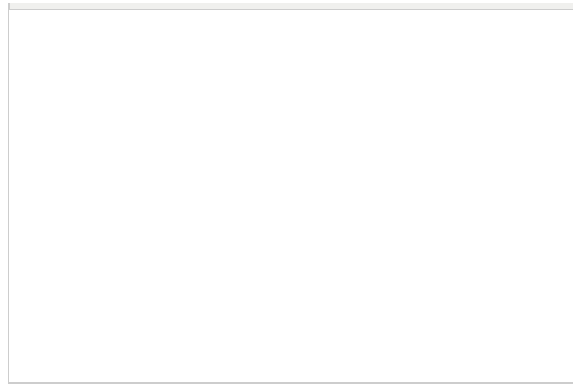
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