

## Tech textile researcher to visit India

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Seshadri Ramkumar, associate professor at Texas Tech's Institute of Environmental and Human Health, will be venturing to Coimbatore, India to speak at the Association of Nonwoven Fabrics Industry — or INDA — Nonwovens Training Course, which will be held from Aug. 12-13.

INDA, which has been holding the workshop since 2007, is a trade association which represents more than 300 leading global textile companies. According to its website, its mission is to promote the value and profitability of the nonwovens/engineered fabrics industry worldwide.

"They are the leading trade association for the emerging textiles called nonwovens," Ramkumar said.

INDA became familiar with the nonwovens research being done at Tech through their attendance of the International Conference for Advancement in Textiles, Machinery, Nonwovens and Technical Textiles — which was created by Ramkumar — and became interested in collaborating with Tech on the workshop.

"Texas Tech University is the first and only, so far, partnering with them to offer this workshop in India," Ramkumar said. "So in that way we are the lead to collaborate with the biggest trade association in the nonwovens area to offer the unique training program on nonwovens in India."

INDA also collaborates with an India-based consulting firm called TecniTex Nonwovens, which coordinates the workshops.

Recently, Ramkumar has been generating media attention because the Environmental Protection Agency approved his cotton-carbon invention, Fibertect, which also sparks international interest in Tech.

Larry Hobbs, vice president of manufacturing at Hobbs Bonded Fibers — the company that manufactures Fibertect — said Fibertect has brought a lot of publicity to Tech.

"The Fibertect itself has generated a lot publicity for Texas Tech," Hobbs said, "and made Dr. Ramkumar's department a leader in the U.S. for nonwoven technology."

Shawn Wade, director of communications for Plains Cotton Growers, Inc., said Ramkumar's forward thinking and connections in India helped foster this prestigious relationship and can greatly benefit Tech.

"The neat thing about Dr. Ramkumar's research is that it's very forward thinking," Wade said, "and it's kind of put him into some areas of research that a lot of Tier One-type universities are shooting for."

Although India is the second largest cotton-producing nation in the world, the amount of cotton they produce cannot support their growing textiles industry.

Wade said India's growing textile industry opens a new market for the U.S. because cotton can be exported to India.

"They've got so many people to feed that they don't really have the cotton land — the extra land to grow a lot more cotton," Wade said. "So, any up-tic in their textile production is probably going to be reliant on a certain level of imported cotton to feed that industry and that's what is important to the U.S."

Ramkumar said that India's goals in the textiles industry are impossible to attain without importing cotton and using it to its fullest.



Muralidhar Lalagiri

SESHADRI RAMKUMAR, AN associate professor at the Institute of Environmental and Human Health, demonstrates the use of a needlepunching machine for the production of nonwoven textile products. Ramkumar's research, in part, led to the creation of Fibertect™, a nonwoven cotton product which the Environmental Protection Agency approved for the cleaning of oil from the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

"When you grow the textiles industry into nonwovens and technical textiles, they won't even have cotton," Ramkumar said. "So they need to import and the United States can take that as a new and emerging market."

He said the relationships he is building in India will help Lubbock's economy, but also has major benefits for Tech.

"This puts Texas Tech on an international map," Ramkumar said, "particularly when we are aiming for Teir One. These are certain unique, niche things which Texas Tech can claim they were the first to do."

Hobbs has been in business with Ramkumar since 2004 and said, over the years, he has enjoyed working with the business relationship because of Ramkumar's positive attitude and willingness to share what he knows.

"He's fun to work with because he is so passionate about what he does," Hobbs said, "and I think anytime you find someone that passionate about what they do, they're going to be good at it."



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