

SPEECH

OF

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HON'BLE UNION MINISTER OF TEXTILES

AT

THE INAUGURATION OF ERI SPUN SILK MILL

AT CHHAYGAON (GUWAHATI) ASSAM

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Friends from Media

Ladies & Gentlemen

It gives me immense pleasure to be here today in Guwahati to inaugurate the Eri Spun Silk mill, which I am sure will prove to be an important landmark in the development of the Sericulture industry in Assam.

Silk is a part of the rich cultural tradition of India, going back thousands of years in our history. No festival or celebration in any part of this great country can be imagined without silk. In addition to its cultural roots and ornamental value, silk is also intrinsically woven into the economic fabric of the nation.

Sericulture is an important labour intensive, agro-based cottage industry, providing gainful occupation to more than 6 million persons in the rural and semi-urban areas in India. Of these, a sizeable number of workers belong to the economically weaker sections of society. There is a substantial involvement of women in this industry. Sericulture is an environment-friendly activity that generates sustainable employment.

India is the second largest producer of silk in the world, after China. There are 4 commercially exploited varieties of silk in the world today, which are Mulberry, Tassar, Eri and Muga. India is the only country in the world to produce all these four varieties. The rich golden Muga

silk is unique to our country, and within India, 86% of total Muga production comes from the State of Assam.

The world today is a global village, and the opportunities available are enormous. The ability to produce all 4 varieties of silk in India constitutes our real strength. This must be leveraged on. I realize that it may take us considerable time to give China a run for its money in mulberry silks, but we can, and must, immediately exploit our premier position in the production of Vanya silks comprising of Tassar, Eri and Muga. It is our endeavour to focus on enhancing production of these varieties, and the mill being inaugurated today is a vital step in this direction.

As you are aware, India has been on a growth trajectory of over 8%. To ensure that the fruits of this growth reach the 1 billion plus people of this great country, we need to ensure the inclusion of people from every part of the country in productive economic activities. We, in the Textile sector, are conscious of our responsibilities in this regard. The Govt. of India is fully committed to provide every assistance for the development of the sericulture industry in the North Eastern parts of the country. Under the 11th Five Year Plan, Rs. 56.51 crore has been released as Central Share to the North Eastern State for the development of the sericulture, and of this, Rs. 25 crore has been Assam's share. Against the target of 10% Plan funds to be earmarked against the North East, my Ministry has spent almost 31% of the CDP allocation for the North East. I am proud to learn that due to these efforts, the Eri silk production in the North East has increased by over 37% in just a year. I would like to congratulate the Department of Sericulture, Govt. of Assam and the Central Silk Board who have been successfully working towards improving the sericulture activity in the State.

I am pleased to learn that over 95% of the Eri production in the country comes from the North east, of which Assam produces about 50%. I am also happy to know that there are over 2 lakh people engaged in the sericulture industry in the North East, as I am convinced that occupations drawn from locally available materials and resources are vital to ensuring inclusive growth. During my visits to various parts of the country, I have observed that the most sustainable means of livelihood come from locally available resources. Definitely, there is a need to add technology to such occupations, which are in synergy with the local environment. Technology has to be introduced to traditional products to make them nationally and internationally competitive and the Eri Spun Silk mill is a valuable step in this direction.

I would urge the business community, especially exporters, to create a niche market for Eri silk, which, I understand, is unique in several respects. It has excellent thermal properties, possessing the warmth of wool and the sheen of silk. Unlike most other silks, Eri is an AHIMSA silk, as the live pupa is first taken out and then the cocoon shell is used for producing spun yarn. These distinctive properties can be exploited to create a brand image for Eri silk, and I hope to see a concerted effort in this direction from all stakeholders.

The establishment of this Eri Spun Silk mill in Guwahati with the support of the Govt. of India and the Govt. of Assam is a step in the right direction. The unit will provide backward and forward linkages and give the desired impetus to development of Ericulture in Assam in particular and the North Eastern States in general. The setting up of this unit is also welcome, as it provides an opportunity to look beyond the traditional uses of hand spun yarn. Eri mill spun yarn has the potential to allow expansion into development of a range of

innovative products including carpets, denims, knit dress materials etc.

I am glad to be here today to inaugurate the Eri Spun Silk mill and the composite silk unit established by M/s. Fabric Plus. I wish this unit success in all its endeavours.

All the best.

Thank you,