

Developing *eri* culture as means of rural livelihood stressed

CORRESPONDENT

MANGALDAI, March 6 – “ Since my childhood I have been engaged in *eri* culture with my parents and grand parents. We used to produce *eri* silk worms or cocoons only for our house hold needs. But such traditional *eri* culture in a very limited manner is not justified in the present times. Today the rural *eri* farmers should come forward to undertake this culture in a much extended way to cover almost the whole village, ” said Punya Lata Daimary, the national award winning *eri* farmer of Udalguri.

The ideal *eri* farmer was sharing her experience with hundreds of other *eri* farmers of Darrang and Udalguri who were participating in the ‘Eri Krishi Vigyan Mela’ organised by the Central Silk Board (CSB), Azara, Kamrup (R) under the Ministry of Textiles, Govt of India at District Library Auditorium here on Tuesday. The veteran *eri* rearer while participating in the inaugural function further said, “ if you want to succeed you

must not lose patience and leave it in the middle. At the beginning I myself suffered serious loss. However, I didn’t give up and so today I can earn about Rs 3 lakh per year. Now I am able to bear the school admission fee of Rs 25,000 of my grand children and looking after my big family.”

Addressing the participants from the chair, Dr Bijoy Kr Singh, Scientist (D) and in-charge of Muga Silk Worm Seed Production Centre, Guwahati under CSB highlighted the objectives of such *melas* as an eye opener for the *eri* farmers of the area regarding proper plantation of saplings of castor, kesseru and tapioca on which the silk worms depend for feed and application of new scientific techniques for better production. He stressed the need of developing *eri* culture as a potential means of rural livelihood. The inaugural function was also addressed by Chitta Ranjan Das, Joint Director, State Sericulture Department and Dr Mamani Sahu, Scientist (D) and in charge Eri Silk Worm Seed Production Centre (ESSPC), Azara

among others. Two progressive woman *eri* farmers of Bandiya Chapori area, Mangaldai, Anowara Begum and Ashina Khtaun were also awarded in the function which was earlier inaugurated by Razvée Hussain, Additional Deputy Commissioner, Darrang by lighting the ceremonial lamp.

The inaugural session was followed by technical session where scientists and senior sericulture officials including Dr Banka Bihari Singh, Scientist (D), ESSPC, Azara, BK Hazarika, Prashanta Das participated as the resource persons. They threw light on many relevant subjects like systematic plantation and rearing technology supported by slide show presentation. Superior production quality of the newly-developed C2 breed of Eri silkworm and problems faced by the farmers were also discussed in the technical session amid interactions with the participating farmers. An exhibition on scientific *eri* culture was also organised outside the auditorium to motivate the local farmers.

Telangana to improve textile industry ecosystem

B KRISHNA MOHAN

Hyderabad

TELANGANA is working to set up an exclusive market to support the textile industry. This will come up in Warangal, where the government had proposed to set up a mega textile park, said a top official.

"The market will be for grey and dyed clothes. The idea is to have all the elements of the textile supply chain at one place," said Jayesh Ranjan, managing director of Telangana State Industrial Infrastructure Corporation, the nodal agency for land allotments for industrial projects.

The proposed market will come up in about 30 acre, he said, adding that the land has been identified.

The state is one of the largest producers of cotton but less than 20 per cent is spun in the state, the rest taken to other states, the official said, adding that creating the full ecosystem will increase the employment potential in the state.

The government had called the industry representative for a meeting to seek feedback on ways to improve the textile and allied industries. They suggested improvement in areas of ginning, weaving, spinning and other facilities. The industry's recommendations would be presented to the chief minister for approval shortly, he said.

Among others, it is planning to decentralise setting up of low end looms. In this case, about 300 looms would be set up at one location with some common facilities. For high end looms, it would be an integrated facility.

"We are looking at increasing the spinning capacity in Telangana with private participation," Ranjan said.

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COMMODITY CORNER

Subsidised imports, lack of export sop hurt Indian jute

Mills seeking export assistance and a market stability scheme

RITWIK MUKHERJEE

UNION finance minister Arun Jaitley's first full-fledged budget has not been as exciting for the jute industry as textile minister Santosh Kumar Gangwar's announcements made few days before the budget.

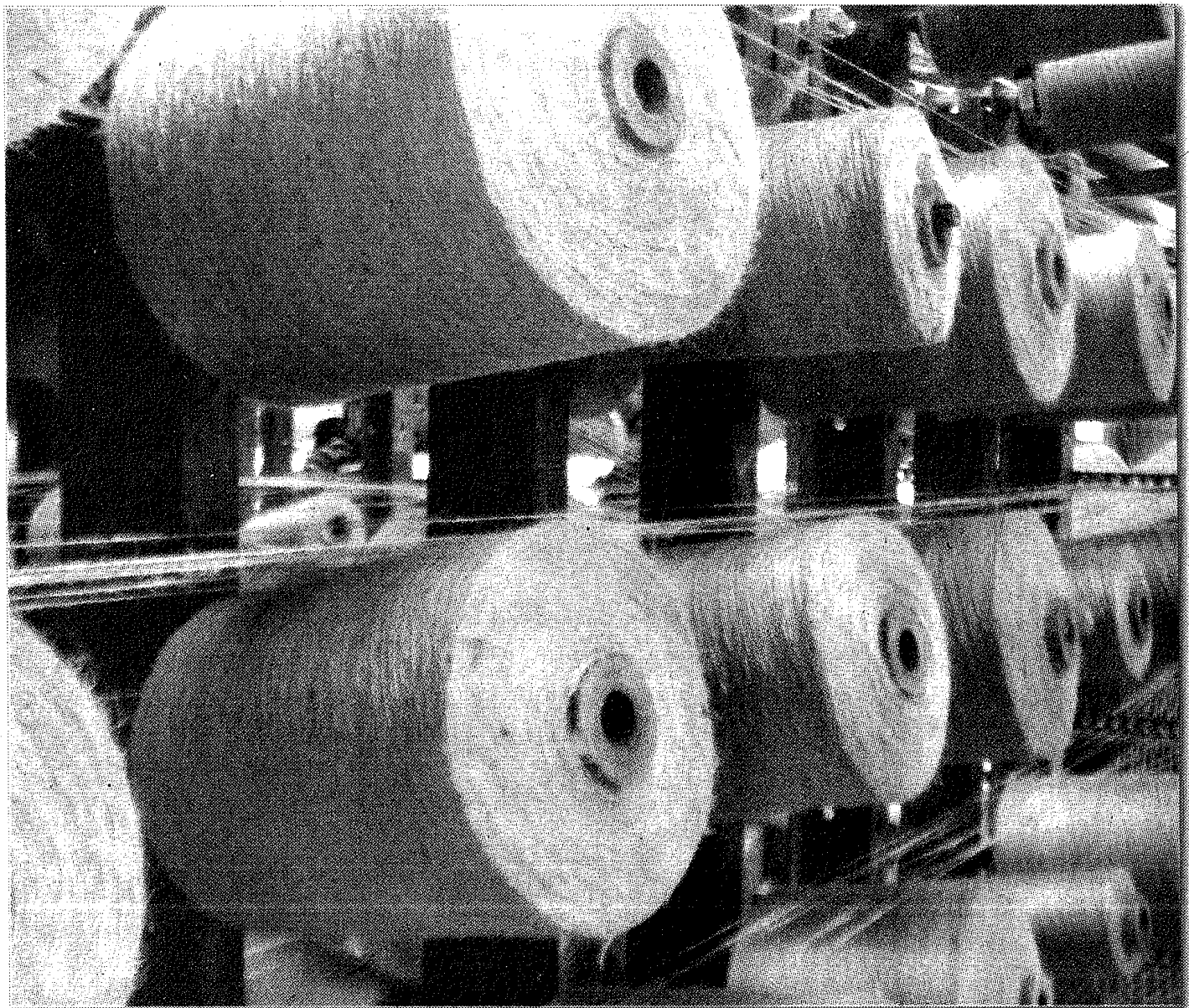
Gangwar had said the jute industry had an important place in the national economy. "It is one of the major industries in the eastern region, particularly West Bengal. Jute, the golden fibre, meets all the standards of 'safe' packaging being a natural, renewable, biodegradable and eco-friendly product," he had said while elaborating some of the major initiatives taken by the central government to strengthen the jute sector.

It was, therefore, not without a reason that Raghavendra Gupta, chairman of Indian Jute Mills Association (IJMA), was expecting the budget 2015-16 to address some of the key issues facing the sector.

"The financial year 2015-16 will be a critical year for the jute industry. On behalf of IJMA, we had made a submission about some of the outstanding issues to the textiles secretary in December. We were hopeful that the budget will address some of them," Gupta said. But we were left in the lurch.

IJMA was looking forward to announcements like export incentive scheme, level playing field vis-à-vis Bangladesh and increase in duty drawback rates. It was also expecting imposition of countervailing duty to reduce imports of jute goods from Bangladesh, thereby ensuring a level playing field for Indian jute manufacturers. The jute industry in Bangladesh enjoys around 10 per cent subsidy. IJMA was also hoping that the finance minister would make announcements regarding extensive use of jute geo-textiles under the PMGSY scheme.

Gupta said the Indian jute industry requires an export assistance scheme (EMA) to increase its share in the global jute products market. A draft EMA scheme is pending for approval with the ministry of textiles for the last 3 years. This scheme can easily be financed out of the cess being paid by the jute industry, which is one per cent ad valorem at present.



UNDER THREAT The cash subsidy of 10 per cent on jute goods exports from Bangladesh is also applicable to exports made to India. There is zero duty on import of jute goods from Bangladesh which creates an uneven field

The industry needs support from ministries of textiles and finance for approval of the scheme.

Moreover, the cash subsidy of 10 per cent on jute goods exports from Bangladesh is also applicable to exports made to India. Under the Saarc treaty, there is zero duty on import of jute goods from Bangladesh, which creates an uneven field between jute manufacturers of India and Bangladesh. Subsidised jute goods from Bangladesh are flooding the Indian market, affecting the interests of Indian jute manufacturers. Import of jute goods from Bangladesh has increased at a rate of 40 per cent between July 2014 and September 2014 over the same period last year. Stressing the need for

countervailing duty on jute goods imports from Bangladesh to the tune of subsidy extended by Dhaka, he said imports from that country surged 35 per cent last year (April-December) at the expense of Indian manufacturers who cut down their production by more than 25 per cent during the same period.

Other industry officials said one of the major demands of the jute industry is a long-term policy under the Jute Packaging Materials Act of 1987. Continuous threat of dilution is a deterrent for the entrepreneurs making substantial investments in jute mills. The implementation of such a policy will help reduce the cost of jute bags supplied to the government for grain packaging by around 30 per

cent over the next 2-3 years through technological upgradation of jute mills and product redesigning. Also, if the jute industry is provided market stability for its core products like sack, the jute mills will be able to increase their share of value-added products from 2 per cent to 7-8 per cent in the next 5 years.

All these expectations and demands have to be seen in the context of the fact that jute is 100 per cent biodegradable and its cultivation adds 10 million tonnes of oxygen and absorbs 13.5 million tonnes of carbon dioxide. Over 45 lakh farmers and 3.5 lakh workers are engaged with the jute industry.

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MAMATA IN DELHI TO MEET MODI FOR DEBT WAIVER

New Delhi, March 8:

West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee will seek an interest waiver for her state on the repayment of huge debt during a meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi here Monday.

She arrived in the capital in the evening.

"I shall meet the PM tomorrow to secure our rights. I am not going to Delhi seeking alms. The state should get its rights," she said in Kolkata before leaving for Delhi.

Ms Banerjee, considered to be a strong critic of Mr Modi, is expected to make a fervent plea for waiving the state's debt, which was taken by the earlier regime.

Before meeting Mr Modi, the first one between the two leaders since Mr Modi became the Prime Minister, the Trinamul Congress will



have an interaction with all her party MPs.

She had earlier skipped the Niti Aayog meeting called by Mr Modi where chief ministers of several states were present.

She is also likely to meet finance minister Arun Jaitley on March 10 and seek more funds and debt waivers for her state, which facing a severe financial crisis.

The state inherited a huge debt burden from the previous Left Front regime which ruled the state for 34 years and it is our legitimate demand to seek waivers, a close aide of Ms Banerjee said. — PTI



Commerce minister Nirmala Sitharaman (right) and her joint secretary Arvind Mehta (left) felicitate Shingora Textile MD Mridula Jain during the ECGC-D&B Indian Exporters Excellence Awards 2015 in Mumbai on Saturday. — PTI



AMIT CHAKRAVATY

Control + Refresh

Designer Narendra Kumar on re-launching his store and learning from his e-commerce experience

KIMI DANGOR

EVERYONE takes a car to work. I just take an aircraft," says Narendra Kumar quite matter-of-factly. The designer, whose day job as Creative Director at Amazon India, takes him to Bangalore every Monday morning, only to return to his hometown Mumbai for the weekend, is in the city mid-week for the launch of his Khar, Mumbai, outpost.

During the two years it has taken to set up the fashion segment of the e-commerce giant's India operations, Kumar has had scant time to concentrate on his own label. "Starting up a company with a few employees and building it up to over 100 people has been a lot of work. And now that we're spearheading Amazon India Fashion Week, you can imagine how quickly we've had to ramp up in a very short while," he says.

His commitment to his new role, coupled with property lease issues, may have led to the closure of his earlier Mumbai store, but he's back with a renewed perspective and a fresh, youthful collection. And Kumar insists there are no regrets. "I'm one of the few creative directors for an online company in the world, so you can imagine how important curation and

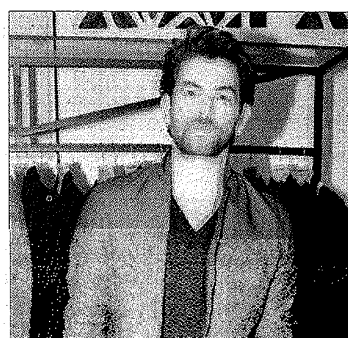
fashion is at Amazon. My work at the company is like design work, but on a much larger scale. How many people get the chance to change the way one billion people live? As a designer I'd be influencing fewer people. Here, the scale is 1,000 times larger than my own work," says Kumar, who has also tried his hand at teaching, manufacturing and editing a fashion magazine in his nearly two decades long career. "And each aspect has only helped me grow and progress as a designer," he adds.

The year 2012 saw Kumar make it to the Esquire's Big Black Book of Style's list of "The Best Men's Stores in the World", becoming the only Indian brand to have achieved that distinction. "You grow up thinking you want to be the best in the world, but it seems like such a far-fetched idea. The fact that it happened suddenly created a void. What next, I wondered. I had to rethink my priorities and reset my goals. That's when the Amazon offer came in and the job took my goals to a different level altogether," he says.

And today, with a strong team in place at Amazon, it's time to shift part of his focus to his eponymous label. With a refreshed state of mind, Kumar claims he's looking at the design process through a different perspective. The new store reflects this



renewed purpose with its modern, minimalist and clean lines. "While we still maintain the level of our craft, the idea is to address fashion trends in a big way," says Kumar.



(Clockwise from above) Narendra Kumar at his fashion store in Khar, Mumbai; Neil Nitin Mukesh and Yuvraj Singh in Kumar's designs

If there's one thing that the Amazon stint has taught him, it is that fashion happens every day. "With the Internet, trends come and go every day. If you're not on top of things and get sucked into the seasonal statement cycle, you miss out on different contexts of fashion." Keeping that in mind, Kumar's Spring-Summer 2015 offering takes off on the '70s tide sweeping through fashion right now. "We've done retro, but in a modern context, with bell bottoms, denims, high-waist pants, lace, etc. for women." The menswear looks are cooler and sportier. "Tailoring has taken off in a

big way. Men increasingly want to look more global than local," says the menswear designer.

While fashion week participation may still be low on his current list of priorities — "maybe next season," he says non-committedly — for now, he is committed to making Amazon India Fashion Week, to be held in Delhi later this month, a successful event. As the title sponsor's creative director Kumar will be working closely with the Fashion Design Council of India (FDCI), an organisation he had famously filed a case against, with the Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Commission in 2006, when the governing body prohibited designers from participating simultaneously at both LFW and the erstwhile Wills Lifestyle sponsored India Fashion Week. Today, hatchets have been seemingly buried and Kumar is content to look "at the bigger picture". "It's good to be in a role that can help shape their system and build a framework that will enable a lot more designers, especially new talent, to grow their brand online," he says, erring on the side of caution. The activist in him may be dormant for now, but Kumar is raring to go with a possible e-commerce deal in the works, enthusiastically "taking a leap into the next era".

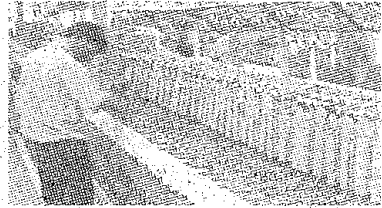
अफ्रीका में टेक्सटाइल क्लस्टर लगाएगी सरकार

अमर उजाला ब्यूरो

नई दिल्ली। भारत सरकार अब अफ्रीका में टेक्सटाइल क्लस्टर लगाएगी। दोनों देशों के बीच बढ़ते आपसी आर्थिक सहयोग के मद्देनजर सरकार ने अफ्रीकी देशों में टेक्सटाइल क्लस्टर लगाने का फैसला किया है। इस फैसले से दोनों देशों को फायदा मिलेगा। अफ्रीका में निवेश, रोजगार व उत्पादन को प्रोत्साहन मिलेगा। वहीं अफ्रीका में भारतीय निवेश का रास्ता साफ होगा और अफ्रीकी बाजार में भारतीय उत्पाद के लिए जगह बनेगी। इस प्रकार का पहला क्लस्टर इथोपिया में खोला जाएगा।

मंत्रालय सूत्रों के मुताबिक अफ्रीका के 20 देशों में कॉटन का उत्पादन काफी अधिक मात्रा में होता है, लेकिन इन देशों में कॉटन के कोई उत्पाद नहीं बनाए जाते हैं। ये देश

अफ्रीका के 20 देशों में खूब होता है कपास का उत्पादन, लेकिन इन देशों में नहीं बनाए जाते कॉटन के कोई उत्पाद



अपने सारे कॉटन का निर्यात कर देते हैं। मंत्रालय सूत्रों के मुताबिक कॉटन के अच्छे उत्पादन को देखते हुए अफ्रीका के इन देशों में टेक्सटाइल उत्पाद बनाने की पूरी संभावना है चूंकि यहां कच्चे माल के साथ श्रम व बाजार भी आसानी से उपलब्ध है।

मंत्रालय सूत्रों के मुताबिक अफ्रीका के कई देश भारत को अपने यहां टेक्सटाइल पार्क या क्लस्टर खोलने का निमंत्रण दे चुके हैं, लेकिन इथोपिया ने तो भारत की मदद से टेक्सटाइल क्लस्टर खोलने के लिए जमीन तक का आवंटन कर दिया है। इथोपिया में प्रस्तावित इस क्लस्टर का नाम इंडो-अफ्रीका

एकीकृत टेक्सटाइल क्लस्टर का नाम दिया गया है। सूत्रों के मुताबिक इथोपिया सरकार ने अदीस अबाबा से 400 किलोमीटर दूर इथोपिया के पूर्व इलाके में 1,123 हेक्टेयर जमीन का आवंटन किया है।

मंत्रालय सूत्रों के मुताबिक इस क्लस्टर में टेक्सटाइल क्षेत्र से जुड़ी हर प्रकार की यूनिट होगी। इनमें स्पीनिंग, वीविंग, निटिंग व अन्य अपैरल मैन्यूफैक्चरिंग से जुड़ी अन्य यूनिटें लगाने का प्रस्ताव है। वस्त्र मंत्रालय इन दिनों इंडो-अफ्रीका टेक्सटाइल क्लस्टर खोलने के लिए विस्तृत परियोजना रिपोर्ट बनाने की तैयारी में है।

Raw Input

There's too much cotton around

Excess supply and a drop in Chinese demand keep prices down

BHAVANA ACHARYA

Since August last year, domestic cotton prices have headed south, mirroring the trend in global markets.

The Cotlook A index for cotton prices is down 26 per cent over the past year.

The thorn in the commodity's side was China, the world's largest consumer, whose cotton policies have global consequences. Last year, China changed farmer support policies, began restricting cheaper imports through its import quota system, and then started selling from the reserve stocks it holds. The resultant drop in Chinese demand impacted global prices and prospects for India, for which China is the largest export market.

According to USDA reports, Chinese imports have shrunk about 70 per cent in the past

three years. This apart, the alternative to cotton — synthetics — has also turned cheaper on falling crude oil prices.

Supply in excess

On the domestic front, cotton prices lost 28 per cent over the past year. A sharp decline began in August, when the crop's marketing season kicks off.

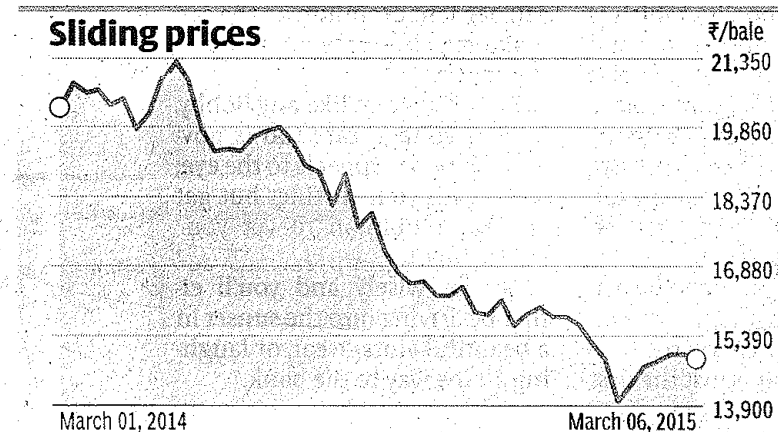
Cotton production was already up 9 per cent in the 2013-14 season to 39.8 million bales, according to Cotton Corporation of India. Now, production estimates for the 2014-15 season, at 40 million bales, are not much higher than the year before due to lower yields.

But even so, this level of production is above the five-year average of around 34 million bales.

The absence of China in absorbing this increased supply put a lid on prices. India's exports to China dropped 26.4 per cent between April and October 2014, going by India Ratings & Research reports.

While exports to countries such as Pakistan and Bangladesh

Sliding prices



can pick up, overall exports are still low.

The Cotton Corporation estimates that total exports will drop 23 per cent in the 2014-15 season over the previous one.

Domestic mills haven't taken advantage of the lower prices and stepped into the fray either, to make up for lower exports. Growth in global demand has not significantly gathered pace. Domestic demand is also muted as wary consumers kept away. Mill consumption is estimated

to move higher by just around 4 per cent for 2014-15, resulting in higher stockpiles.

Adding to the woes of excess supply, minimum support prices for cotton have moved higher only marginally by ₹50 or so, below the approximate increase of ₹100 the season before. Market prices are now ruling below minimum support prices.

In the medium term, the situation is likely to remain the same and prices for cotton may not see a sharp climb.

Here's why. The USDA predicts a fall in production, with large producers such as China, the US and Pakistan reducing output. The Indian market is set to remain flat, but will still be the top producing region for the second year running.

China factor

Usually, change in cotton prices in a particular year impacts demand the following year. Demand may, therefore, pick up in the coming quarters owing to the sharp 25 per cent drop in cotton prices.

But with higher cotton stockpiles to draw on, this demand can be met even with the reduced production.

Moreover, much of the increase in demand is estimated to stem from the Chinese market, which holds almost half the global stock.

The country's cotton policies and import restrictions can keep up the pressure on prices. In Indian markets too, the muted export climate and higher stocks can restrict price rises.



Really?

India became the world's largest producer of cotton last season after a production drop by China

COUNTER CHINA PLAN Among many economic initiatives, PM may extend Line of Credit for infrastructure projects during his 2-day trip

Modi to Push Economic Ties in Lanka

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New Delhi: India is expected to offer a credit line to Sri Lanka to ensure funds for infrastructure and development projects and expanded support for military training during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's two-day visit to the island nation this week, as New Delhi aims to match growing Chinese influence in the Indian Ocean Region.

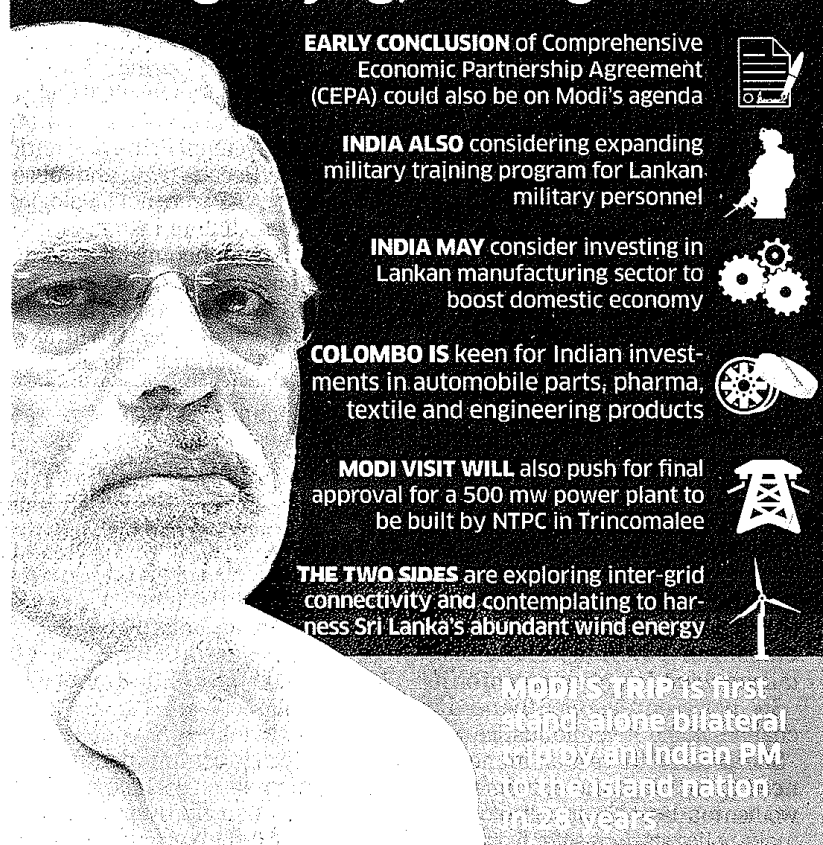
The March 13-14 visit is the first standalone trip by an Indian PM to the southern neighbour in 28 years. With a new government in Colombo under President Maithripala Sirisena, India will explore ways to boost economic partnership to make the free trade agreement between the countries more effective, diplomatic sources said. There are already signs of revival in bilateral relations, which had stagnated under the previous pro-China Mahinda Rajapaksa regime.

Early conclusion of the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement, which was blocked by the previous Lankan government, could also be on the agenda of meetings between Modi and Sri Lankan leaders.

The commerce secretaries of the two countries had met in Colombo last week to explore ideas to boost trade and increase Lankan exports to India under the FTA, sources said. India, on its part, will consider investing in the island nation's manufacturing sector to help boost its economy. Indian investments would increase the export capacity of Sri Lanka, the sources said, adding that Colombo is keen for Indian investments in automobile parts, pharmaceutical, textile and engineering products. New Delhi has also proposed joint ventures between Indian and Lankan entrepreneurs.

The first FTA that India signed with any country was with Sri Lanka. Trade between the two is worth more

Looking Beijing, Talking Colombo



EARLY CONCLUSION of Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) could also be on Modi's agenda

INDIA ALSO considering expanding military training program for Lankan military personnel

INDIA MAY consider investing in Lankan manufacturing sector to boost domestic economy

COLOMBO IS keen for Indian investments in automobile parts, pharma, textile and engineering products

MODI VISIT WILL also push for final approval for a 500 mw power plant to be built by NTPC in Trincomalee

THE TWO SIDES are exploring inter-grid connectivity and contemplating to harness Sri Lanka's abundant wind energy

MODI'S TRIP is first standalone bilateral visit by an Indian PM to the island nation in 28 years

than \$5 billion. A key deliverable from the visit will be the credit line for Lanka's infrastructure sector and development projects, an official said, but refused to divulge details.

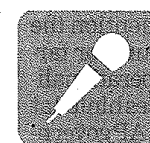
The countries are likely to work towards the final approval for a 500 mw power plant, which is proposed to be built by India's state-run NTPC under a 2012 agreement in Trincomalee, a strategic port in eastern Sri Lanka. Modi could visit Trincomalee besides Anuradhapura, Jaffna and Colombo. He will also address the Lankan Parliament.

The two sides are exploring inter-grid connectivity between and contemplating to harness Sri Lanka's

abundant wind energy potential. New Delhi and Colombo last week agreed upon implementation of the ferry service between Talaimannar and Rameshwaram as well as Colombo and Tuticorin, along with conclusion of the Revised Air Service Agreement that had been initiated in September 2013 with an eye on boosting tourism.

Hoping to balance China's growing interests in the Indian Ocean Region as part of its Maritime Silk Route Strategy, New Delhi located the maritime needs of the island nations in the region and started addressing them during the past one year, sources said. Last year, India-Sri Lanka-Maldives trilateral talks

ANOTHER FIRST



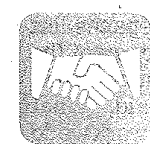
PM could visit Trincomalee, Anuradhapura, Jaffna & Colombo. He will address the Lankan Parl

FTA EXPANSION



Modi is also likely to explore ways to boost economic ties to make FTA more effective

STRENGTHENING GRADUALLY



Commerce secys met recently to boost trade & increase Lankan exports to India under FTA

were held in Delhi and the ambit could be expanded to include Mauritius and Seychelles - two other countries that Modi is visiting in his three-nation trip starting March 10. The aim would be to strengthen maritime security cooperation, including anti-piracy and counter-terrorism operations in the region.

In Mauritius, the PM will commission an India-built patrol vessel. India and Seychelles are hoping to sign an agreement on mapping of the waters around the archipelago. Seychelles has been viewed by China as a possible replenishment port for navy ships taking part in anti-piracy operations in the region.