The Southern India Mills' Association
Post Box No. 3783, 41 Race Course, Coimbatore - 641 018
Phone: 0422 4225333 | Fax: 0422 4225366
E-mail: info@simamills.org | Web: www.simamills.org

NEWS CLIPPINGS –05-01-2019

Entrepreneurs see increase in demand for jute, cotton bags	The Hindu https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-tamilnadu/entrepreneurs-see-increase-in-demand-for-jute-cotton-bags/article25916434.ece

Skill training programmes to be conducted for youngsters

The State government's ban on 'one-time use and throwaway plastics' is seen as an opportunity for young entrepreneurs involved in manufacturing jute and cotton bags as they said that the demand for the products is on the rise. S. Sekar, of Palliyuthu in Arachalur, who runs a small unit at his house says that earlier he used to make 200 jute bags everyday and the wholesale product price ranges from Rs. 40 to Rs. 240. But in the past one month, the orders had gone up to 500 bags a day and he has started making 1,000 cotton bags everyday now.

Bulk orders

He said that bulk orders is on the rise after the plastic ban was enforced from January 1 and expect more opportunities for youngsters who take up the manufacturing.

Started with a minimum investment and subsidy from the government, Mr. Sekar has expanded his unit from two machines to six machines now.

With marketing opportunities widening for jute and cotton bags, Canara Bank's Rural Self Employment Training Institute that provides various skill training to youngsters has also proposed to conduct more training programmes in the coming days.

Senior Manager and Director of the institute K. Sudharson, said that after the government announced the plastic ban, the institute conducted two training programmes for 35 youngsters who had started manufacturing units now.

He said that youngsters in the age group of 18 to 45, mostly women, attend the training and start their own units.

He expressed confidence that with increase in demand for jute and cotton bags more youngsters will take up the production. Details can be had from the institute at, 2nd Floor, Ashram Matriculation Higher Secondary School Campus, Karur Bypass Road, Kollampalayam, Erode 638002, Phone 0424-2400338.

3 things that make India's path to becoming fifth largest economy harder	Business Standard https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/3-things-that-make-india-s-path-to-becoming-fifth-largest-economy-harder-119010400099_1.html

India's economy grew at a faster pace than most major nations in 2018, and this year, it's poised to overtake the UK to become the world's fifth-biggest.

But that journey won't be smooth. The outcome of a general election due by May is a potential pitfall for a nation already battered by emerging market turmoil and a currency rout last year. Also, any attempts by the government to undermine the central bank's freedom and raid its surplus capital may spook investors and carry damaging consequences for the economy.

Here are the key themes to watch for in 2019:

Global Slowdown

Nomura Holdings Inc. estimates global growth will ease to around 2.8 per cent in 2019 from 3.2 per cent in 2018, led by a slowdown in China, and a moderation in the US and euro-area toward long-term trends. "As cyclical impulses become less favorable, we expect exports, manufacturing and the investment cycle to weaken" in India, Nomura analysts said.

Monetary Policy

After raising interest rates twice last year, 2019 may see the Reserve Bank of India reverse course by giving up its hawkish monetary policy bias in favour of a neutral stance. With demand slowing and oil prices easing, inflation is expected to average toward the RBI's medium-term target of 4 per cent in the first quarter of 2019. The six-member monetary policy committee may even be in a position to lower interest rates in the first half of the year, according to some analysts.

Shaktikanta Das, the new central bank governor, is seen as more dovish on monetary policy, saying inflation is benign and supporting growth is part of the RBI's focus. His predecessor, Urjit Patel, who unexpectedly quit last month, took a more cautious approach on price growth.

Interest-rate cuts could give a boost to lending and growth before the general election.

Election Risks

With the world's biggest election around the corner, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is under pressure to boost spending, especially to help farmers, to shore up voter support and spur an economy that's starting to slow. Data for the three months through September showed growth eased to 7.1 percent from the 8-plus percent pace seen in the previous quarter.

Spending pressures intensified last month following disappointing results for Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party in regional elections, and farm loan waivers announced by the opposition Indian National Congress party in three states it won from the BJP.

The government is said to be studying three options, including a cash handout for farmers, to ease the distress for farmers and to shore up popular support ahead of elections. It's already slashed taxes on some goods and services and announced exemptions on pension withdrawals to appease voters.

These are in addition to programs for guaranteed crop prices and healthcare, the full impact of which will be known only in the budget, due to be delivered on Feb. 1.

With the government already exceeding its budget deficit targets in October, any additional measures will need to be balanced with possible reductions in spending to meet the fiscal goal of 3.3 percent of gross domestic product for the year through March.

A loss for Modi in the general election is a risk in terms of policy continuity, and investors are watching the events closely.

Sonal Varma, chief India economist at Nomura Holdings Inc. in Singapore, expects the government to be in limbo until a new administration is in place in May, posing a drag on spending growth in the first half of 2019.

No job losses due to merger of public sector banks, says Arun Jaitley	**Business Standard** https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/no-job-losses-due-to-merger-of-public-sector-banks-says-arun-jaitley-119010400438_1.html

Finance Minister Arun Jaitley on Friday said in Lok Sabha that there would be no loss of jobs due to merger of public sector banks.

Earlier this week, the Cabinet approved merger of Vijaya Bank and Dena Bank with Bank of Baroda.

Jaitley said that there would be no job losses due to merger of the banks and that the move would create a bigger entity like the State Bank of India (SBI).

The cost of lending could also become cheaper, he added.

During the Question Hour, the minister said that out of the 21 public sector banks, 11 are under PAC (Prompt Corrective Action) framework.

PAC is initiated against banks that have high levels of non-performing assets (NPAs).

Replying to a supplementary question, Jaitley said the curve of non-performing assets would go down and that the

Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code has helped in bringing back around Rs 3 lakh crore into the system.

Jaitley said that the State Bank of India (SBI) and other public sector banks have been making operational profits. They incurred losses due to provisioning for non-performing assets, he added.

With regard to recapitalisation of Public Sector Banks (PSBs), the minister said that Rs 51,533 crore has been infused into them in the current financial year till December 31.

"In the budget estimates of FY 2018-19, Rs 65,000 crore has been allocated for recapitalisation of PSBs and an amount of Rs 51,533 crore has been infused in PSBs till December 31, 2018," he said.

The minister also said that in recent past, Rs 90,000 crore was allocated in the Union Budget and infused in various PSBs by the government during financial year 2017-18.

Subsidised credit for merchant exporters to boost textile exports	**Business Line** https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/subsidised-credit-for-merchant-exporters-to-boost-textile-exports/article25910519.ece

Textile exports have received a major boost as government includes merchant exporters under the interest equalisation scheme for pre and post-shipment rupee export credit.

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs recently approved the proposal by Department of Commerce for extending the facility, which was available only to textile manufacturers and exporters.

Under the Interest Equalisation Scheme, exporters in the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise (MSME) category can avail credit at 5 per cent on all pre and post-shipment on export of all products. While non-MSME get credit at 3 per cent on 416 specified tariff lines.

However, till recently the scheme was available only to the manufacturer-exporters and not to the merchant exporters.

Dr KV Srinivasan, Chairman, Cotton Textiles Export Promotion Council said MSMEs constitutes a significant part of the textiles sector and plays a crucial role in exports. However, they do not have the expertise and resources to advertise their products in the export markets unlike the large manufacturers, he said. They, therefore, depend on the merchant exporters to export their products.

The coverage of merchant exporters under the Interest Equalisation scheme will encourage them to export more products from the MSME sector which contributes significantly towards employment generation especially for women, he added.

The move will also significantly reduce the cost of finance for the merchant exporters who contribute substantially towards textile exports and make them more competitive.

The decision comes as a huge relief as cost is one of the major component besides quality to remain compete in the global market for manufacturers, exporters and merchant exporters, he said.

Urging the Government to cover cotton yarn under the export benefit scheme, Srinivasan pointed out that Cotton Yarn is the only textile product that has not been given any benefits under the Foreign Trade Policy though it is a value added product with substantial value addition happening within the country.

Inclusion of cotton yarn under the scheme will encourage exports and benefit the cotton farmers, he said.

Bt cotton technology still effective to control bollworms, except pink ones: Govt	**Business Standard** https://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/bt-cotton-technology-still-effective-to-control-bollworms-except-pink-ones-govt-119010400890_1.html

Bt cotton technology is still helpful in controlling bollworms, except for pink ones, the government said on Friday.

"Bt cotton technology was originally meant for controlling bollworms per se, in cotton and the Bt technology is still offering good control for bollworms (except pink bollworm Spodopetra litura) for the past 16 years," Minister of State for Agriculture Gajendra Singh Shekhawat said in a written reply to Rajya Sabha.

The minister was replying to a query on whether genetically engineered Bt cotton has failed in the country.

In the current kharif season of 2018-19 crop year, he said around 88.27 per cent of the 122.38 lakh hectares cotton area is under Bt cotton.

"Farmers are being advised to follow integrated crop nutrient management, integrated pest management and optimum of higher plan density in the fields to get higher yield," Shekhawat said.

Two-day textile ministry outreach event beginning Saturday	**SME Times.com** http://www.smetimes.in/smetimes/news/top-stories/2019/Jan/04/textile-outreach42398.html

Ministry of Textiles is organizing a two-day event, on January5-6 in New Delhi, to highlight the achievements of the textiles sector.

The two-day event will be inaugurated with a textiles show “Artisan Speak” at Lal Qila.

In the programme on 6th January 2019 an outreach event of the “Accomplishments and Way Forward for Textiles Sector” will be inaugurated by Minister of Textiles, Zubin Irani.

Minister of State for Textiles, Ajay Tamta, Secretary Textiles, Raghvendra Singh and other senior officers of the Textiles Ministry and other Ministries/ Departments of Government of India will also attend the programme.

A short film on the achievements of the Ministry will be screened during the inaugural session of the day-long event on 6th January 2019.

Participants from the Government and industry will address the inaugural session which will be followed by panel discussions on subjects related to the textiles sector like technical textiles, ease of doing textiles business and access to global markets and supply chains.

Weavers, artisans, investors and corporates have contributed immensely towards the achievements in the textiles sector and to express gratitude for their contribution the function will conclude with an award ceremony presided over by the Vice President of India, M.Venkaiah Naidu on the evening of 6th January 2019.

The two-day event will also chart out a road map for building new capabilities for sustainable and resource efficient growth of the textiles sector.

The last four and half years have been transformational for this sector.

Industry specific policies, technological upgradations, focus on research & development, investment in human resources and strategic intervention for market promotion have made Indian textiles most desirable and trusted brand on the global map.

SEBI tweaks norms for commodity exchanges	**The Hindu** https://www.thehindu.com/business/markets/sebi-tweaks-norms-for-commodity-exchanges/article25914193.ece

Bourses to disclose quantum of trading for all participants

Commodity derivatives exchanges will now have to disclose the quantum of trading done by farmers and other commodity market participants like millers and wholesalers on the exchange platform, as the capital market regulator has tweaked the disclosure norms for such bourses.

In a circular issued on Friday, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) directed commodity bourses to disclose the open interest and turnover of various categories of participants like farmers, farmers producer organisations (FPOs), value chain participants, proprietary traders, foreign participants, and domestic financial institutional investors.

Value chain participants include processors, commercial users like dal and flour millers, importers, exporters, physical market traders, stockists, cash and carry participants, produces and wholesalers among others.

Currently, commodity derivatives exchanges disseminate turnover data for only two broad categories of participants — clients and proprietary.

Incidentally, the SEBI move assumes significance also because a large section of market players believe that the commodity market turnover is largely dominated by speculators and other participants that are not genuinely connected with the commodity segment.

Transparency important

"Transparency in the commodities derivatives markets is paramount for price signals as well as its correlation with the underlying physical market activities," stated SEBI in the circular.

"To begin with, stock exchanges shall make the disclosures on a weekly basis for every Wednesday by next Wednesday by October 1, 2019. By April 1, 2020 onwards, such disclosures shall be made on daily basis by 6 p.m. on T+1 day," SEBI said in the circular.

Special Package for garments, made-ups sectors to increase exports	**Indian Express** http://www.newindianexpress.com/business/2019/jan/04/special-package-for-garments-made-ups-sectors-to-increase-exports-1920516.html

To promote Government participation in production and exports of textile and apparel products, Government has announced Special Package for garments and made-ups sectors.

The package offers labour law reforms, additional incentives under ATUFS, enhanced duty drawback coverage and relaxation of Section 80JJAA of Income Tax Act, official sources said.

Further, the rates under Merchandise Exports from India Scheme (MEIS) have been enhanced from 2 per cent to 4 per cent for apparel, 5 per cent to 7 per cent for made-ups, handloom and handicrafts with effect from November 1, 2017, the sources said.

Products such as fibre, yarn and fabric in the textile value chain are being strengthened and made competitive through various schemes, inter alia, Powertex for fabric segment, Amended Technology Upgradation Fund Scheme (ATUFS) for all segments except spinning, Scheme for Integrated Textile Parks (SITP) for all segments.

IGST has been exempted on import under Advance Authorisation and Export Promotion Capital Goods (EPCG) Scheme.

The government has also enhanced interest equalization rate for pre and post-shipment credit for the textile sector from 3 per cent to 5 per cent with effect from November 2 and provided assistance to exporters under Market Access Initiative (MAI) Scheme.

In 2017-18, India's overall merchandise exports stood at USD 303.38 billion and textile and apparel exports including handicrafts valued at USD 39.22 billion comprising 13 per cent of overall exports of India.

2018: A Happening Year for Textiles-Apparel	**Fibre 2 Fashion** https://www.fibre2fashion.com/news/textile-news/2018-a-happening-year-for-textiles-apparel-246504-newsdetails.htm

or global trade and industry, particularly textiles and apparel, 2018 turned out to be a very happening year. **Rajesh Kumar Shah** *looks at top ten developments that changed or is likely to affect global textiles-apparel production and trade.*

#1 US: Trump's Decisions

United States (US) President Donald Trump's decision of imposing duties on goods of other countries with which it has a negative trade balance, undoubtedly, had the maximum impact on the textiles and apparel industry worldwide in 2018. The US decision forced many textiles and apparel exporting nations to rethink, and be ready with an alternative strategy in case their exports to the US dwindle. As experts focused on pros and cons, especially the US-China trade war, some nations like Bangladesh and Vietnam saw in it an opportunity to boost their exports to the US. The year also saw the US signing a revised free trade agreement with South Korea as also the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), a rechristened version of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

#2 UK: Brexit Uncertainty

Throughout the year, Brexit remained a point of discussion, over whether common rates would apply for goods entering the European Union (EU) and the United Kingdom (UK) or not. In November, 27 members of the EU approved the British withdrawal and future ties, insisting that it is the "best and only deal possible," paving the way for an "orderly withdrawal." However, the year ended inconclusively on the issue, as the British Parliament is yet to ratify the deal concluded by Prime Minister Theresa May with the EU. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and Moody's have warned that a no-deal Brexit would entail substantial costs for the UK. The Bank of England (BoE) has said that the UK may suffer an even bigger hit to its economy than during the global financial crisis 10 years ago if it leaves the EU in a worst-case Brexit scenario.

#3 EU-Japan EPA

The signing of the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) by the EU and Japan has made textiles and fashion companies in both EU member nations and Japan be prepared to export more goods. The EPA will create an open trading zone covering 635 million people and almost one-third of the world's total gross domestic product (GDP) and remove tariffs on industrial products in sectors where the EU is very competitive, such as chemicals, textiles and clothing. Once implemented from February 2019, the EPA—the biggest ever trade agreement negotiated by the EU—will remove the vast majority of the €1 billion of duties paid annually by EU companies exporting to Japan, and will increase EU export opportunities in a range of other sectors, including textiles and clothing.

#4 China: Opening Up

Expanding the opening up of its economy, the Chinese government, effective July 1, 2018, reduced average tariff rate for clothing, shoes and hats, and sports and fitness supplies from 15.9 per cent to 7.1 per cent. It also cut import tariffs on goods from India, South Korea, Bangladesh, the Laos and Sri Lanka from July 1, under the Second Amendment of the Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement. This was followed by a further cut in import tariffs from November 1. For textiles, the average tariff rate was brought down from 11.5 per cent to 8.4 per cent, giving a chance for the global textiles and apparel industry to compete with local manufacturers in the Chinese domestic market. Further, rules for retail imports through cross-border e-commerce are to be relaxed from January 2019.

#5 CPTPP: Takes Effect

The year saw the signing of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), and the coming into effect from December 30, after being ratified by six countries—the threshold to bring it into force. The CPTPP, the successor to the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) after the US withdrawal, has eleven economies—Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam—representing around 16 per cent of global economic output and 500 million people. The CPTPP includes reduction in tariff and non-tariff barriers among members with high standards on human rights, labour and environment. The agreement resulted in fresh investment in the textiles and apparel sector in member countries like Vietnam, which is expecting the creation of 17,000-27,000 jobs each year for Vietnamese workers from 2020.

#6 India: Government Support

The Indian government took a number of steps to boost the country's textiles and apparel industry. It approved 100 per cent foreign direct investment (FDI) under the automatic route for single brand retail trading (SBRT), a Scheme for Capacity Building in Textile Sector (SCBTS) with an outlay of Rs1,300 crore till 2019-20, and Samarth scheme for training 10 lakh people in the textiles industry. It also increased basic customs duty on 76 textiles and apparel products at 6-digit level from mid-July, and followed it up by doubling of import duty on 328 textile products to 20 per cent from the earlier 10 per cent. Duty drawback rates were marginally decreased on several textile items, though they were marginally raised on apparel items with effect from December 19. Overall, these steps have resulted in bringing optimism and new vigour in the country's textile and garment industry.

#7 AfCFTA: Africa Rising

In what is expected to become the largest free trade area across the globe, 49 African nations signed the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). It will create an integrated market of over a billion people in Africa with a combined GDP of nearly $3.3 trillion. AfCFTA will offer opportunities of scale and the free movement of people, goods and services. The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa estimates that the AfCFTA will increase intra-Africa trade from the current 10-16 per cent to nearly 52 per cent by 2022. Among African countries, Ethiopia stood out by setting up industrial parks in Addis Ababa, Hawassa, Mekelle, Adama, and Humera, and attracting investments from Chinese, Italian and Indian textiles and apparel companies.

#8 Asia: Wage Hikes

Apparel exporting countries like Bangladesh, Cambodia and Myanmar witnessed a rise in minimum wage, increasing the cost of production in these countries. In Bangladesh, the second-largest garment exporter after China, minimum wage increased from Tk5,300 ($63.21) to Tk8,000 ($95.41) with effect from December 1. In Cambodia, the minimum wage rose to $170; to be increased further to $182 from January 1, 2019. In Myanmar, the daily minimum wage for an eight-hour day was set at K4,800 ($3.11) from the earlier K3,600 ($2.33). In Africa, there was a 10 per cent rise in Ghana, and around 7-7.5 per cent hike in South Africa. Even in the US, there was a pay hike in 18 states beginning January 1, 2018.

#9 Uzbekistan: Marches On

The government of Uzbekistan introduced modern forms of cotton and textile production. The flow of Chinese investment into Uzbekistan's textile industry registered a rise, while Uzbekistan Textile Industry Association signed export contracts with German and Polish firms. The association also signed an agreement with the government of Russia's Ivanovo region to expand cooperation between enterprises in the textiles, garment and hosiery sectors. Uzbekistan also signed an agreement to supply textile products to France as the first trade house of Uzbekistan, UzFranceTrade, opened in Paris. There was also an agreement between the Uzbek silk industry association Uzbekipaksanoat and the Italian Silk Association to set up an Italian industrial park in Uzbekistan. The Uzbek government is mulling over a trade agreement and cooperation with India, China and Belarus, among other countries.

#10 Environment: Strict Monitoring

The government of China renamed its ministry of environmental protection as the ministry of ecology and environment in 2018 and strengthened its environment monitoring efforts. It also imposed an environment protection tax from January 1. In the UK, the Environmental Audit Committee called on five leading online-only fashion retailers to offer evidence as part of its inquiry into sustainability of the fashion industry. Meanwhile, global brands took steps to source more sustainable materials, designing products that are made to last and encouraging customers to return unwanted clothes for reuse. The 2018 edition of the Pulse of the Fashion Industry report said 75 per cent of the fashion companies improved their environmental and social performance over the last year. Committing to change the path of fashion, the UN Alliance on Sustainable Fashion—comprising 10 different UN bodies—is going to launch UN Environment in March 2019.

Demand up for retail space as more brands want to open shop in Coimbatore	**The Hindu** https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Coimbatore/demand-up-for-retail-space-as-more-brands-want-to-open-shop-in-coimbatore/article25907146.ece

Coimbatore's property market is seeing an upward demand trend for retail space as more brands want to open shop here.

Be it supermarkets or branded showrooms, they are looking at presence in multiple locations in the city.

S. Visweswaran, president of Coimbatore Association of Realtors, says lot of companies and brands are coming to Coimbatore. Brands in different sectors such as textiles and automobiles are looking at opening outlets in Coimbatore, Erode, and Salem in this region. Hence, their demand for space is high. Some of the brands and supermarkets already present in the city want to expand in different areas. They also want warehouses. Hence, there is a demand for large retail spaces.

According to JLL India, not many new retail properties came up in the last two years, resulting in inadequate supply for retail space. The demand is from all segments of retailers and across the city. There is a need for 800 sq.ft to 1,500 sq.ft. retail areas and there are not many options now.

Another realtor points out that after the implementation of GST and e-way bill, Coimbatore has become a hub for movement of goods. The demand for large warehouses has picked up. A couple of industries have also set shop in the district in the last one year.

Mr. Visweswaran adds that the demand for space in the educational segment and small IT companies is growing. These IT companies are willing to buy space too. Coimbatore also expects more multiplexes spread in different main locations, he says.

According to JLL India, the residential rentals have, however, not increased much in the last couple of years. The growth in residential rentals is specific to a few localities and also depends on the property. Across the core areas of the city, the demand is mainly for rental properties of less than ₹15,000 a month in the residential sector.

FICCI welcomes loan-restructuring window for MSMEs	**Fibre 2 Fashion** https://www.fibre2fashion.com/news/textile-news/ficci-welcomes-loan-restructuring-window-for-msmes-246574-newsdetails.htm

The Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) has welcomed RBI's move to provide a loan-restructuring window for MSMEs with loans up to ₹25 crore. RBI has decided to permit a one-time restructuring of existing loans to MSMEs that are in default but 'standard' as on January 1, 2019, without an asset classification downgrade.

The restructuring has to be implemented by March 31, 2020.

"This will provide a much-needed boost to the small and medium enterprises that had been reeling under financial pressures on account of reasons beyond their control," FICCI president Sandip Somany said in a press release.

MSMEs are the backbone of the Indian industry, but generally face greater vulnerability on account of the payment mechanisms which came under greater stress in recent times. The tight liquidity situation in the financial markets only exacerbated the problems faced by the MSMEs and a measure like the one announced by RBI was clearly needed to support these units, the release said.

"The relief comes at the right juncture and will provide the much-needed momentum to push the growth levers as MSMEs make a significant contribution to domestic output, exports as well as job creation," said Somany. "The RBI scheme should provide an incentive to the lenders to look at restructuring of the loans extended to MSMEs in a more pragmatic manner and we hope that it will also expedite decision making in this regard."

RBI's relief window for MSMEs together with other measures announced by the government for easier and affordable access to credit such as interest subsidy on loans should help in reviving growth of MSMEs and provide an added impetus to push the overall growth of the economy upwards of 8 per cent, the release added.

Geographical indication to standardise handicrafts industry	**Rural Marketing** https://www.ruralmarketing.in/industry/policy/geographical-indication-to-standardise-handicrafts-industry

In order to organise and standardise the Indian handicrafts, Government of India has registered approximately 22.85 lakh artisans under Pahchan initiative. Moreover, 35 crafts have been identified as endangered crafts and 92 crafts have been registered under Geographical Indication Act, while replying to a question, Minister of State of Textiles, Ajay Tamta, said the Lok Sabha on Thursday.

Handicraft is an unorganised and diversified sector with an estimated 70 lakh artisans practicing 32 broad crafts categories throughout the country. For standardisation of carpet, carpet rating scheme has been formulated, but handicraft items are mainly made by hands. Beauty of handicrafts lies in the artistic hands of the artisans and each handicraft product is different from other even if it is made by same artisan using same raw material. The Government has taken initiatives to establish authenticity of handmade products. For this purpose, scheme of handicraft mark has been conceptualised and handicraft mark for wood craft is being formulated on pilot basis, the minister further said informed the lower house of Indian Parliament.

Further to create awareness and celebrate success of GI registered crafts, commemorative postage-stamp on five crafts namely Kutch Embroidery, Karnataka Bronzeware, Maddalam of Palkkad, Sikki Grass Product of Bihar and Blue Pottery of Jaipur was released on December 12, 2018, Tamta added.

Direct marketing portal for handicraft artisans has been launched to provide direct market access facility to genuine handicraft artisans including tribal artisans working in the far flung rural areas. Any handicraft artisan registered under Pachchan can utilise this portal for marketing their products. Till date 302 artisans have been registered on the portal. India Handmade Bazaar portal has been established by the department itself. Digital market place is also in place, the minister further said in the Lok Sabha.

Oeko-Tex releases new regulations for 2019	**Fibre 2 Fashion** https://www.fibre2fashion.com/news/textile-news/oeko-tex-releases-new-regulations-for-2019-246556-newsdetails.htm

Oeko-Tex has released new regulations for its certifications, product labels, and services in 2019. The goal of Oeko-Tex is to reinforce consumer protection and sustainability along the value creation chain for textiles and leather. The existing guidelines for the Oeko-Tex product portfolio have thus been amended again for the start of the year.

The new regulations will come into effect after a three-month transition period on April 1, 2019, according to a press release by the company.

The substance benzene and four amine salts have been included in the Standard 100 by Oeko-Tex and Leather Standard by Oeko-Tex and limit values have been defined. The substance quinoline, which has been under observation by Oeko-Tex since 2018, is now also regulated with a limit value. In the course of standardisation of the limit value requirements, the requirement ‘<’ now applies for almost all limit values, according to a company press release.

For over 25 years, the Oeko-Tex’s strategy has not been to wait for legislation but to be proactive in the field of consumer protection as a pioneer. As a result of the implementation of the above-mentioned updates, the Standard 100 and Leather Standard already comply with the requirements of the new ‘Reach Annex XVII CMR Legislation’

(Commission Regulation (EU) 2018/1513). In contrast, this legislation addressing 33 CMR substances will only be applied for products from 1 November 2020 onwards. Thus, Oeko-Tex is way ahead and also covers many other parameters related to consumer protection.

New to the limit value catalogues are various substances of very high concern: these are the siloxanes D4, D5, and D6 as well as diazene-1,2-dicarboxamide (ADCA). Furthermore, a requirement has now been made with regard to the extractable part of the metals barium and selenium.

In Annex 6 of the Standard 100 by Oeko-Tex, limit values have been made stricter for various parameters. This relates to the parameters for phthalates (softeners), alkylphenols, and alkylphenol ethoxylates as well for per- and polyfluorinated compounds. The even more stringent requirements for residues in textile materials will result in an overall lower impact on the environment, workers, and consumers. In 2019, two new product groups will be under observation: glyphosate and its salts as well as the carcinogenic N-nitrosamines and N-nitrosatable substances.

Glyphosate products in particular, currently the quantitatively most important ingredient in herbicides, received a lot of media attention during 2017 and 2018 and were the subject of fierce controversial debates around the world. At the end of 2017, approval for glyphosate and for further use was only temporarily extended by the EU to five years – under protest from different consumer groups and environmentalists. With the ‘Under observation’ action, the Oeko-Tex association is now looking more closely at the substance group in relevant textile materials and is analysing the situation in more detail.

The STeP assessment will be extended to leather production facilities in 2019. The name will also be changed in the course of this integration: Sustainable Textile Production will become Sustainable Textile and Leather Production – the product name STeP remains the same

Industry Ministry Aims at Rp130tn Investments in Three Sectors	**Tempo.Com** https://en.tempo.co/read/1161665/industry-ministry-aims-at-rp130tn-investments-in-three-sectors/full&view=ok

The Industry Ministry projected investment values for the chemical, pharmaceutical, and textile industries (IKFT) would reach Rp130 trillion in 2019.

The ministry’s chemical, textile and miscellaneous industry (IKTA) director general, Achmad Sigit Dwiwahjono, believed previous capital investments would strengthen the structure of the manufacturing sector in the country as well as substitute imports.

“In this political year, several long-term investors remain. We hope the investments will boost the growth of the national industry,” said Sigit in a written statement on Friday, January 4.

According to Sigit, investments in the chemical industry would gain the highest value as they were capital-intensive and required high-end technology. The chemical industry also plays a strategic role in the upstream sector as it produced raw materials needed by other industries.

“Several investors have shown interest in expansion in the upstream chemical sector, including South Korea, whose discussions are still afoot," said Sigit.

Sigit mentioned PT Lotte Chemical Indonesia invested US$3.5 billion in the construction of petrochemical industry, which was expected to produce 2 million tons of naphtha cracker per year in Cilegon, Banten. In addition, PT Chandra Asri Petrochemical also invested US$5.4 billion.

Read: Radicalism Hampers Investment

“We are committed to encouraging the acceleration of the complex petrochemical construction, thus it will support the reduction of petrochemical product imports by a minimum of 50 percent,” Sigit noted.

Sigit hoped the project would utilize more local components and employ local workers. The ministry, he added, planned to build Polytechnic of Petrochemical Industry in Cilegon this year in a bid to meet the demand for operators and other employees in the sector. “The government will also provide tax holiday.”

Sigit was upbeat the pharmaceutical industry growth in Indonesia could reach 7 to 10 percent in 2019. Besides higher investments, the positive performance of the industry could be jacked up by the National Health Assurance (JKN) program. “The program is still a magnet to investors because it raises demands,” he concluded.

Turkish export group looks to grow U.S. business	**Home Textiles.com** http://www.hometextilestoday.com/article/560770-turkish-export-group-looks-grow-us-business/

Bursa, Turkey – Turkey is already doing about $300 million in business with the United States related to home textiles, but Pinar Tasdelen Engin, chairperson of the Uludag Textile Exporters’ Association (UTIB), would like to see that figure rise.

Engin, who is focused on overseeing the association’s activities, including organizing R&D projects and studies and coordinating trade fair activities worldwide, said the United States is currently the fifth largest export market, trailing Germany, the United Kingdom, Bulgaria and Romania. In 2017, UTIB’s total global exports had reached nearly $1.2 billion and Turkey’s total home textile exports were around $2.7 billion.

In recent years, we have seen very positive developments in terms of our textile exports to the U.S.,” she said, noting that towels, bed linens and curtain fabrics are the top exports, although bathrobes are also popular.

“Turkey’s textiles speak for themselves…and with our ability to deliver quickly and efficiently, we are excited to continue developing opportunities for mutual trade with the U.S. and countries around the world,” said Engin.

Turkey’s rich history in textiles allows producers to specialize in all the sub-categories related to the home, she said.

“We expect to see continual growth as a result of our high-quality designs, high-tech production and nature-friendly sustainable products.”

Sustainability and eco-friendliness are at the heart of Turkey’s textile production, said Engin. “Given that most of our exports go to countries that have very strict demands on sustainability, it is hugely important for us that our products are eco-friendly."

She said UTIB trains its member companies about issues ranging from life cycle assessment to carbon and water footprints to clean production methods to international emission management standards.

"We do this via our special research and development coordination center," she said, adding, "We plan on continuing these R&D activities so that we can ensure that all Turkish products are safe and environmentally friendly."

UTIB, which was founded in 1986 and has 2,200 members, also supports Turkey's home textile industry by organizing various congresses and workshops, representing the country at international trade fairs and hosting buyers' delegations, seminars and training sessions.