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NEWS CLIPPINGS –16-03-2019

Cotton procurement nearly ceases as prices firm up	Financial Express https://www.financialexpress.com/market/commodities/cotton-procurement-nearly-ceases-as-prices-firm-up/1516600/

With prices firming up, the cotton procurement by state-run Cotton Corporation of India (Cotton Corp) has almost come to a standstill. CCI has procured 11.6 lakh bales so far, nearly four times the amount collected during the same period the previous year, top officials said and maintained the cotton body would remain in the market to ensure that prices remain stable. Procurement is likely to touch 15 lakh bales by the end of this season.

Cotton Corp chairman & managing director P Alli Rani said cotton procurement was down but not closed. Prices have firmed up and therefore the purchase under procurement is down, she said, adding the 348 centres are active and will remain open throughout the season to ensure that the market remains stable.

This season onwards, Cotton Corp has introduced stricter quality norms for ginning and processing units in cotton-producing states.

Until now, there was a loophole with regard to trash and moisture content that was exploited by some ginners, market sources said, adding that Indian cotton is of a lower grade as it contains higher trash content and moisture. India is the only exporter which gives trash and moisture guarantees in global trade. India introduced mandatory traceability in cotton a couple of months ago and its implementation was likely to take some time, Alli Rani said. Because of the stricter norms, the inventory with Cotton Corp is good quality and most buyers have expressed satisfaction with it, she said.

She also said Cotton Corp was likely to soon start buying cotton on its commercial account. “There is a scope for another 10 lakh bales on commercial account.” Of the total procured stocks, around 80% have been purchased from Telangana, followed by Maharashtra. Cotton lower in quantity was also procured from Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha.

The minimum support price for medium-staple variety is at `5,150 per quintal and that for long staple at Rs 5,450/quintal. The government had raised the support price for cotton by 26% this year.Cotton prices in the market are currently in Rs 5,700-Rs 5,800/quintal and are likely to remain on the higher side, market sources revealed. Until now, around 67% of the cotton has arrived in the market this season.

Significantly, the Cotton Association of India (CAI) expects a big drop in the Indian cotton crop figures for this season as there will be no third, fourth or fifth pickings in the country.

According to the CAI crop committee’s last meeting on March 1, 2019, the committee has estimated Indian crop size of 328 lakh bales of 170 kg against earlier estimation of 330 lakh bales. Last year, crop size was 365 lakh bales which means India will have 37 lakh bales less crop as compared to the previous season. The current opening stock is 28 lakh bales and arrivals are 213.42 lakh bales till February 28. The import has been around 5.50 lakh bales up to February 28, which means the available crop is 246.92 lakh bales. The consumption has been around 131.66 lakh bales from January 10, 2019, to February 28.

Tariff rate quotas can be a boon for trade deals	Financial Express https://www.financialexpress.com/opinion/tariff-rate-quotas-can-be-a-boon-for-trade-deals/1517838/

India has a whopping $104 billion trade deficit with the 16-member Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) grouping, which was 64% of India's total trade deficit of 2017-18. No wonder, there is a raging debate on opening up a very significant portion of the market, given the sensitivities around agriculture- and labour-intensive domestic industries. Several other trade agreements are also in various stages of negotiations.

Long-term back-ending of tariffs or spreading tariff eliminations over a longer period of time have been our palladium of trade negotiations in the past. However, it need not continue to be so for all lines in which concessions are eliminated. The introduction of tariff-rate quotas (TRQs) can be a more germane transitional tool, providing a degree of safeguard to the future demand growth in a rapidly expanding market. This is especially true when negotiating with countries which have saturated markets and do not reciprocate such a potential for growth in their markets.

A TRQ allows a set quantity of specific products to be imported at a low or zero rate of duty. TRQs are established under trade agreements between countries.

TRQs do not function as an absolute limit on the quantity of product that may be imported. The "TRQ commitment", therefore, does not apply any limits on the quantity per se of import of a product, but applies a higher rate of duty for that specific product once imports up to the "TRQ commitment" have been reached.

For example, the US cotton tariff quota protects US cotton growers while allowing textiles manufactures to import some cheaper cotton also.

Another aspect of TRQ is that the quota component works together with a specified tariff level to provide the desired degree of import protection. Essentially, a TRQ is a two-tiered tariff instrument. Imports entering within the quota portion of a TRQ are subject to a lower tariff rate called the tariff quota rate or TRQ rate. The later Imports that are unable to make it to quota's quantitative threshold face a much higher tariff rate, which is normally the MFN tariff (MFN tariffs are what countries promise to impose uniformly on imports from other members of the WTO). In other words, Tariff Rate Quota is a limit on the quantity eligible for lower or zero duty.

The use of this instrument is globally quite prevalent. It is estimated that as many as 1,200 TRQs are operated each year by WTO members, including the EU, Japan, Canada and the US. This ensures that limited volumes of these sensitive products can enter their market at a low tariff, whereas the tariff outside the TRQ quantity is kept high to offer a degree of protection to the domestic producers.

Essentially TRQs are a compromise. On one side, they protect domestic producers from having to face competition from large quantities of imports. While on the other, they allow consumers and producers in the importing country to enjoy benefits, albeit a limited one, of lower priced products.

Tariff quotas are used on a wide range of products. Most are in the agriculture sector: cereals, meat, fruit and vegetables, and dairy products. Sugar is not far behind. Sugar is protected in most producing countries with tariff quotas. However, not all TRQs are food: And not all are agricultural.

In fact, most of the current WTO TRQs are in the agricultural sector. The idea behind this arrangement was that even if members were sensitive to lowering tariffs in agriculture, they would be obliged to open up a modicum of access to some of their domestic market demand.

In the larger perspective, the compromise in international trade negotiations, comes from the need to strike a balance between the interests of the consumers and downstream producers and the competing domestic producers of each country. How that balance is struck depends on the country's lobbying forces of the various interest groups. The TRQ have found a sweet spot in the evolving global trade arrangements. While they were born of a need to ensure that existing market access was maintained, in recent times, they have played vital roles in consuming trade arrangements.

TRQs have now become a way of reaching a consensus with trading partners to sign up trade deals. The EU-Japan bilateral deal was finally unblocked with a TRQ for cheeses including mozzarella, Brie, Camembert and feta. As for the proposed EU-Mercosur deal, EU TRQs for beef and ethanol are the main event as far as Brazil and Argentina are concerned, though they represent a fraction—only 1% for beef—of total EU consumption.

The success notwithstanding, TRQ have their share of criticism.

Trade liberalisation proponents argue that TRQs are a complex, inefficient and perhaps even counter-productive way to conduct trade liberalisation. They go as far as to say that this will do well to feature is the trade policy of the 19th century, but certainly not the 21st.

They certainly do well to argue that while TRQs allow imports, they do so in an inefficient manner. For, they create new distortions and impediments to further liberalisation. They argue that TRQs have as much to do with managing trade as freeing it. Yet, TRQs now appear to be a permanent fixture of global trade.

The reason is not far to see. On the one hand, TRQs are used as sweeteners to help reach a consensus in trade negotiations, on the other, TRQs help overcome traditional domestic opposition to trade deals—they are a trade-off between the broader interests of consumers and the degree of protection afforded to the competing domestic producers. As a result, it also puts pressure on them to improve their efficiency, while abating the higher production costs on account of market imperfections.

But more importantly, one can ratiocinate its utility as an instrument for stimulating growth in domestic production and investment in manufacturing that is driven by domestic demand.
The challenge, in this context, lies in addressing the concerns of domestic Industry? Their argument cannot be ignored: If duties are zero, who will make in India? Does a reasonable duty wall bring in investments? For example, global car majors invested in India on account of an import duty wall.

A possible clue in addressing this concern lies in surveying the happenings in global trade, especially in regard to China. China has built its global leadership in trade on the strength of its investments. As per the recent Nomura report on Sino-US trade war, 43 per cent of China's exports are by Foreign owned companies, bringing up the pertinacious need for inducing investments in manufacturing—more so today than ever before, as industries in China are relocating or diversifying their production base.

While it can indisputably be argued that the TRQ administration system should be as conducive to trade as possible and must not 'impair or nullify the market access commitments negotiated', it is also argued that a system of TRQ administration which is 'transparent, predictable and minimises transactional costs for traders, is not a unicorn, and it need not be seen as an insurmountable task.

Historically, the quotas are allocated through a slew of processes. These are: Auction, where importers bid for shares or licences; First-come, first-serve, where physical imports charged in-quota tariffs until the quota is filled; Licence on demand, where allocation is made in relation to quantities demanded, often before the period specified for the quota—first-come, first-served or allocations trimmed proportionately; and finally, import by state trading entities.

While the idealist can propound many arguments on the undesirability of TRQs, the realist must take into account the imperfections in the global trade and the salvific effect of TRQs on fast growing markets where domestic manufacture fills in a sizeable portion of the domestic demand.

One cannot dispute the fact that a tariff arbitrage is an effective tool for inducing local manufacture or at least domestic value addition in the country. It has been a basic tool in the country's Phased Manufacturing Program policy. If we are to induce investments in manufacturing, then the future growth in domestic market, perhaps, need not be committed entirely to a zero tariff regime, however back ended. A quantity linked tariff elimination could also be considered in the long run, keeping aside our future demand growth as an inducement for investments and expansion of domestic manufacturing.

Exports rise 2.44%; trade deficit narrows	**The Hindu** https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-business/exports-rise-244-trade-deficit-narrows/article26550573.ece

Merchandise exports grew to $26.67 billion in Feb., imports declined to $36.26 bn

A marginal 2.44% increase in exports as well as lower imports of gold and petroleum products in February, significantly narrowed the country's trade deficit to $9.6 billion, according to data released by the Commerce Ministry on Friday.

India's merchandise exports rose to $26.67 billion in February from $26.03 in the year-ago month mainly on account of higher shipments in sectors such as pharmaceutical, engineering and electronics.

Imports declined by 5.4% to $36.26 billion in the last month, narrowing the trade deficit to $9.6 billion. The gap between imports and exports was $12.3 billion in February 2018, and $14.73 billion in January 2019.

As per the data, the drop in imports was mainly on account of sharp decline in inward shipments of gold and petroleum products.

Gold import falls

While the import of gold fell by about 11% to $2.58 billion in February, as against $2.89 billion in the corresponding month last fiscal, inward shipments of petroleum products were down by nearly 8% to $9.37 billion. During the April-

February period of the current fiscal year, exports grew 8.85% to $298.47 billion, while imports rose by 9.75% to $464 billion. The trade deficit has widened to $165.52 billion during the 11 months of the current fiscal from $148.55 billion compared to the year-ago period, the data said.

Non-petroleum and non-gems and jewellery exports in February 2019 stood at $19.87 billion, as compared to $18.90 billion in the year-ago month. Non-petroleum and non-gems and jewellery exports in April-February 2018-19 were $217.43 billion, as against $201.95 billion in the comparative period last fiscal.

President of exporters' body FIEO Ganesh Kumar Gupta said 18 out of 30 major product groups were in positive territory, with most of them with marginal growth during the month. "However, with this trend, we will be able to achieve merchandise exports of about $330 billion, the highest ever exports for a fiscal," he added.

Meanwhile, RBI said services exports in January 2019 were $17.75 billion, registering a negative growth of 1.02% over December 2018.

No question of giving up special privileges at WTO, say larger developing countries	**Business Line** https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/no-question-of-giving-up-special-privileges-at-wto-say-larger-developing-countries/article26546902.ece

In overall terms, the development divide remains firmly entrenched'

Larger developing countries, including India, China and Brazil, have taken on developed countries that are demanding discontinuation of the special and differential treatment extended to them at the World Trade Organization. They argued that economic indicators such as per capita economic output and poverty levels clearly point out the glaring disparity that still exists between the developing and the developed world.

For Brazil, China, India and Indonesia, the gap in GDP per capita with the US increased by at least 71 per cent and with the UK by 63 per cent between 1994-96 and 2014-16, according to a joint paper by a number of developing countries, including India, submitted to the WTO General Council recently.

"Recent attempts by some members to selectively employ certain economic and trade data to deny the persistence of the divide between developing and developed members, and to demand the former to abide by absolute "reciprocity" in the interest of "fairness" are profoundly disingenuous," the paper stated.

It is important for developing countries to defend the special & differential treatment allowed to them by the WTO as in the on-going areas of negotiations such as disciplines for fisheries subsidies, they can protect some of their subsidies for their poor fishers through this special dispensation.

"The world has indeed changed in many ways since the GATT and the establishment of the WTO, but in overall terms the development divide remains firmly entrenched," the submission said.

It is therefore of greater concern that some members would attempt to ignore this reality in an effort to deprive developing members of their right to develop, it added.

GDP per capita

The submission put forward a number of facts and figures to substantiate its argument. In 2017, the GDP per capita of the US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the EU was $59,531, $45,032, $53,800, $42,941, and $33,715, respectively, while the GDP per capita of developing Members, including China, India, South Africa and Brazil, were all below $10,000, it said.

According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, 10 countries with the largest number of the world's under-nourished people are: India (195.9 million), China (124.5 million), Pakistan (39.5 million), Bangladesh (24.8 million), Ethiopia (21.9 million), Nigeria (21.5 million), Indonesia (20.2 million), Tanzania (17.8 million), Uganda (17.2 million) and Philippines (14.2 million).

The submission also focussed on the necessity to recognise the differing capabilities of developed and developing countries in the area of agriculture. "In many developing members, despite agriculture being the largest source of employment, this sector remains characterised by small farm size, but with large number of farmers dependent on it. In contrast, in the US, agriculture is characterised by extremely large farm size with few farmers dependent on agriculture for their livelihood," it said.

Seal FTA with UK once Brexit is done: Garment exporters	**Times of India** https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/coimbatore/seal-fta-with-uk-once-brexit-is-done-garment-exporters/articleshow/68433999.cms

Tirupur: Some UK-based buyers want them to complete the orders in advance as Britain will leave the European Union soon, a group of knitwear exporters said here on Friday. They urged the Union government to take steps to seal the free trade agreement (FTA) with UK when it would become a nonmember of EU.

"The Brexit deal is set to be sealed on March 29. We heard from our member companies that they have been requested by some UK buyers to ship the garments prior to the time scheduled. Once Britain exits the EU, there may be major change in import and export tariff in UK. So, the buyers from Britain could have requested to avoid loss or ascertain their business," Tirupur Exporters' Association (TEA) president Raja M Shanmugham said. "But, it is not sure how all exporters would respond to the request, which cannot be mandatory. Because the garments cannot be manufactured overnight."

Britain is one of the major importers of apparel goods from India. In case of Tirupur knitwear industry exports, it accounts for 12- 13% of business. As much as Rs 3,000crore worth goods are exported from the cluster a year.

Earlier, trade bodies like TEA and the Apparel Export Promotion Council (AEPC) urged the commerce ministry to take immediate steps to enter FTA with UK once Brexit deal is completed.

"Since there is better preference for Indian apparel goods among buyers and chain stores in Britain, it will be possible to sign FTA with Britain. We have represented the central government to look for initiating talks with UK after it leaves EU," AEPC vicechairman A Sakthivel said.

India has to send out unequivocal signals that it's a reliable trade partner that wants to become part of global supply chain	**Indian Express** https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/united-states-trade-india-china-exports-import-generalised-system-of-preferences-duty-at-a-standstill-2-5629013/

The recent decision of the US to give notice of its intention to rescind India's export privileges under the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) has refocused attention on the state of Indian exports. Under the GSP programme, the US provides duty-free access to 4,800 different goods from 129 designated countries. The immediate loss for India is preferential access at zero or minimal tariffs to the US market for around 1,900 products, which is over half of all Indian products.

The ministry of commerce has reacted to the news by asserting that the losses from the GSP withdrawal are going to be minimal. This assertion is based on the fact that the actual tariff advantage that India was getting from the programme was a meagre USD 190 million, which is just 0.4 per cent of the USD 50 billion over all Indian exports to the US.

The government's argument, unfortunately, misses the point that India is competing for market share in the US with a host of other low-income countries, including Mexico. In industries where margins are small, a very small increase in the market price can cause a large fall in the quantity exported. A potential fall in quantity exported will, of course, imply a much larger cost of losing GSP access. If exporters absorb the tariff increase, then their profit margins will fall, potentially inducing some of them to exit this market completely. The tariff benefit that India currently enjoys is low simply because average tariffs in the US are low. It cannot be used as an indicator of the potential cost to India of losing its GSP privilege.

The GSP development, though, provides a good opportunity for India to introspect on the general state of Indian exports. The raw fact of the matter is that India's share of world exports has been stuck at around 2 per cent for some time now. Essentially, our exports have been growing at the same rate as the rest of the world. For a country that has consistently been one of the fastest growing economies in the world, India's exports should be growing much faster. This is what one saw with China and the other East Asian economies over the last 30 years, and with Japan earlier. Clearly, something isn't working in India.

India's trade deficit narrows sharply to a 17-month low in February	**Economic Times** https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/indicators/indias-trade-deficit-narrows-sharply-to-a-17-month-low-in-february/articleshow/68428079.cms?from=mdr

India's trade deficit shrank to a 17-month low in February on a sharp fall in import of oil, gold and electronics, the items that form the bulk of the country's import bill.

Exports rose 2.44% from a year ago to $26.7 billion, while a 5.4% contraction in imports led to a decline in the trade deficit to $9.6 billion, data released by the government on Friday showed. The previous low for the trade gap was $9.4 billion in September 2017.

The trade deficit was $14.73 billion in January and $12.3 billion in February of the previous year.

"India's overall exports (merchandise and services combined) in April-February 2018-19 are estimated to be $483.98 billion, exhibiting a positive growth of 8.73% over the same period last year," the commerce and industry ministry said in a release.

In February, import of oil, gold and electronic items declined by 8%, 10.81% and 6.5%, respectively.

In the April-February period, the trade deficit widened to $165.52 billion from $148.55 billion in the year-ago period.

The major commodity groups of export showing positive growth in February were organic and inorganic chemicals (4.1%), drugs and pharmaceuticals (16.1%), and ready-made textiles (7.1%), the ministry said.

GLOBAL SLOWDOWN IN TRADE HAS IMPACTED INDIA'S EXPORTS

"Economies across Asia, especially China and Southeast Asian nations, have been showing signs of sluggishness with contraction in manufacturing due to slowdown in the global trade and fragile world economy," said Ganesh Kumar Gupta, president of Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO).

In rupee terms, exports growth was 13.3% in February, with currency depreciation contributing to the rise. Imports denominated in rupee were up 9.75% in the month.

As per official data, 18 out of 30 sectors showed a decline in exports in December.

GLOBAL TRADE SPIN-OFF

China's exports fell 20% in the same period, its largest decline since February 2016.

Despite increasing protectionism, tough global conditions and constraints on the domestic front, FIEO expects India's merchandise exports to clock about $330 billion for the full year 2018-19.

Gupta said the spin-off effect of the global tariff war and the recent rise in crude oil prices due to supply cuts have impacted India's trade, and the recently revoked preferential benefits to Indian exports by the US will further add to the woes of exporters.

Exports in the April-February period were up 8.8% to $298.5 billion. Imports totalled $464 billion over this period, a rise of 9.75%.

Azerbaijan seeks trade, investment exchanges with West Bengal	**Business Standard** https://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/azerbaijan-seeks-trade-investment-exchanges-with-west-bengal-119031500816_1.html

Azerbaijan, located in the south Caucasus region of Eurasia, is keen to establish trade and investment exchanges with West Bengal.

Ambassador of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Ashraf Shikhaliyev, said the dynamics has shifted all of the sudden to the eastern coast of India starting from West Bengal.

Though a small country, Azerbaijan has a huge potential, he said at a session organised by BNCCI here on Friday.

The envoy said language would not be a hurdle as English was spoken in Azerbaijan to some extent.

Some of the sectors which had good potential for exchanges were information and communication, transport, petrochemical and chemicals, hospitality, tourism, agriculture and food processing.

Shikhaliyev said Azerbaijan would also be a suitable destination for MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferencing, Exhibitions) tourism for Indian companies as it had the potential to bring it back to India.

Filming in Azerbaijan was also a feasible area as cost of shooting was much lower than Europe and the country was blessed with mountains, forests and the sea.

Direct flight from Baku, capital do Azerbaijan, to New Delhi would start shortly, he said.

ICA and CAI reinforce MoU	**Fibre 2 Fashion** https://www.fibre2fashion.com/news/textile-news/ica-and-cai-reinforce-mou-248007-newsdetails.htm

The International Cotton Association (ICA) and the Cotton Association of India (CAI) have renewed their memorandum of understanding (MoU) to reinforce the alliance and cooperation between the two associations. The alliance was first established when the MoU was created in January 2014 to formally acknowledge the relationship between the associations.

The association was renewed by ICA president, Bill Ballenden and CAI president Atul Ganatra last week in Mumbai during CAI's international conference.

With the large majority of international raw cotton contracts traded under ICA Bylaws & Rules and India's marketposition as the world's largest producer of cotton, this renewed alliance is significant for the trade, with both associations confident that it will continue to benefit the entire industry, ICA said in a press release.

"The signing of the new MOU marks an important evolution of the special relationship that exists between the ICA and the CAI. It continues to build on a shared desire to put sanctity of contract at the very heart of our Associations. I look forward to us continuing this evolution in the months and years ahead," Ballenden said.

"This memorandum of understanding marks an important relationship for CAI, which is as significant today as it has ever been during our history as an Association. It takes on added significance as we approach our centenary year in 2021," Ganatra added.

The MoU will help continue to foster greater cooperation between the two associations and enable them to work more closely on a number of shared goals, which include promoting sanctity of contract; training and visit programmes; information exchange and dissemination; diplomatic initiatives; testing and quality issues

2.5 Lakh Jute Mill Workers Go on One-Day Strike in West Bengal	News Click https://www.newsclick.in/25-lakh-jute-mill-workers-go-one-day-strike-west-bengal

About 2.5 lakh workers from 52 jute mills in West Bengal went on a one-day strike on March 15 under the banner of Centre of Indian trade Unions (CITU), against the state government refusal to agree to their demands, including hike in minimum wage and guaranteed pension for all workers.

Talking to Newsclick, Gargi Chatterjee, district secretary of CITU for North 24 Parganas, said, "All 52 jute mills are closed today. The workers have rejected the anti-worker agreement put forward in the tripartite meeting, and they are ready to fight for their rights."

Earlier, 21 major trade unions had called for an indefinite strike starting from March 1, demanding implementation of basic labour laws. The unions had been waiting for years for the implementation of the tripartite agreement signed in 2015. However, since the agreement was signed, the worker have only seen its rampant violation, with direct patronage of the Trinamool Congress government.

The demands of the trade unions were minimum wage of Rs 18,000 per month, pension of Rs 6,000 per month, equal wage for equal work for the contractual and temporary workers, dearness allowance of Rs 2.50 per point, regularisation of all badly and special badly workers, immediate payment of long accumulated statutory dues of the retired workers on account of provident fund and gratuity with a guarantee for non-occurrence of such statutory dues in future. They also demanded clearance of all dues of the retired workers on account of Employees' State Insurance (ESI), because of which the workers have been denied the ESI benefits for a long period, and introduction of grade and scale for the wages.

Threatened by the call for the strike, the state government told the unions that their demands will be considered. Several tripartite meetings were called to discuss the issues. After 11 such meetings, an agreement was finalised on Wednesday, March 13. However, this agreement did not resolve, or even address all the issues raised by the workers.

Chatterjee said, "We had demanded that the minimum wage be increased to Rs 18,000 per month. Instead, they just increased the daily wage by Rs 2, which is an increase of just Rs 60 per month. Some of these workers receive wages as low as Rs 250 per day. What good will this increase be for them?"

The trade unions had also demanded that the workers whose names are on the pay-roll be regularised, and the ratio between permanent and temporary workers be fixed at 90:20. Currently, only 10% of the workers are permanent. Without paying any heed to this demand, the TMC government said in the agreement that only 10,000 workers will be regularised. They have also said that the wage for new entrants will be increase to Rs 370 from Rs 257. "But what about the workers who have been working for years in these mills for years at extremely low wages?" Chatterjee asked.

The workers of the jute mills have huge amounts pending in their PF, gratuity, and ESI accounts. The amounts are Rs 300 crore, Rs 600 crore, and Rs 100 crore, respectively. The mill owners and the state government refused to address this issue during the tripartite meeting.

The eight Left-backed trade unions refused to sign the agreement, calling it anti-worker, and walked out of the meeting, accusing that it did not have any benefits for the workers, and the TMC government was trying to garner more profits for the mill owners. The trade unions affiliated to Indian National Congress, Trinamool Congress, and Bharatiya Janata Party — Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC), Indian National Trinamool Trade Union Congress (INTTUC), and Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS) — signed the agreement.

The call for the one-day strike was given by Left-backed trade unions — Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU), All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) United Trade Union Congress (UTUC), Trade Union Coordination Centre (TUCC), All India United Trade Union Centre (AIUTUC), All India Central Council of Trade Unions (AICCTU), Jute Textile Workers' Union (JTWU), Bharatiya Chatkal Mazdoor Morcha (BCMM).

Anadi Sahoo, West Bengal State Secretary of CITU, said, "We were left with no option but to boycott the anti-worker tripartite agreement. The workers have been fighting for years and will continue to do so."

14th CII-EXIM Bank Conclave on India-Africa Project Partnerships to begin on Mar 17	**Business Standard** https://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ani/14th-cii-exim-bank-conclave-on-india-africa-project-partnerships-to-begin-on-mar-17-119031500501_1.html

More than 31 ministers from 21 African countries and business delegates from 37 countries will participate in the three-day 14th CII-EXIM Bank Conclave on India-Africa Project Partnerships beginning here on March 17.

The event being organised by Ministry of Commerce and Industry in association with Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and EXIM Bank of India will mark deepening of India-Africa economic and business ties. It will pave the way for a whole range of cross-border project partnerships, said an official statement issued by the government on Friday.

Echoing key areas identified for conclave, the discussion will revolve around two key themes: digital infrastructure and digital skills.

Ghana's Vice President Mahamudu Bawumia, Guinea's Prime Minister Ibrahima Kassory Fofana and Lesotho's Deputy Prime Minister Monyane Moleleki will be present at the conclave along with Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Suresh Prabhu, Minister of State for Commerce and Industry C R Chaudhary and Secretary at the Department of Commerce Anup Wadhawan.

The India-Africa partnership assumes critical importance for the global economy that is facing a slowdown, moderating trade and investment flows, growing trade protectionism and tightening financing conditions.

Africa's economic growth in 2018 will continue in 2019 in sub-Saharan Africa, averaging 3.6 per cent over the next two years, as per World Bank estimates.

India-Africa bilateral trade volume at 62.66 billion dollars during 2017-18 was about 22 per cent higher compared to the previous year.

The new dynamism of African economies has contributed to the region emerging as one of the highly attractive global investment destinations.

While Africa's acute physical infrastructure financing deficit estimated at about 170 billion dollars has created private investment opportunities in roads, highways, ports and airports, railroads, power generation, transmission and distribution, among other segments, the accelerated domestic economic growth has also increased demand for manufactured goods and services.

Over the years, Indian companies have invested in Africa across diverse sectors like agriculture, agro-processing, oil, gas, mining, minerals, education, healthcare, drugs and pharmaceuticals.

The joint CII-EIF (Enhanced Integrated Framework) session during the conclave will focus on how to seize new opportunities, address key challenges and boost cooperation between Indian businesses and African least developed countries to benefit more fully from inclusive economic development.

Over the last two decades, India has directed focused attention on capacity building initiatives supporting African countries while providing more than one billion dollars in technical assistance and training to personnel under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme.

India has committed 7.5 billion dollars to Africa's infrastructure development, covering 137 projects in more than 40 countries. India has also offered duty-free market access to Africa's least developed countries.

Besides, Exim Bank of India has extended concessional lines of credit for critical projects in Africa.

India has a heavy dependence on fossil fuel imports to meet its burgeoning energy demand. Africa has become a major source of crude oil imports for India, with Nigeria and Angola being the two main geographical sources.

At the same time, Indian energy majors are playing an instrumental role in large oil and gas exploration and production projects in Africa.

A temporary slowdown?	**Free Press** https://www.freepressjournal.in/analysis/a-temporary-slowdown/1482149

Manufacturing sector in the country is in the grip of a slowdown. Key industries have registered lower growth in recent months. The overall industrial growth declined to 1.7 per cent in January, 2019. It was 2.06 per cent in December and 0.3 per cent in November last year. Production in twelve of the 23 industrial segments was on decline. Textiles, motor vehicles, leather and allied products, rubber and plastic products, etc recorded lower production. Capital goods, an indicator of business confidence, too contracted.

The latest numbers are provisional, subject to revision afterwards. However, these paint a none-too-happy picture of the industrial sector which remains key to job-creation. With the real estate sector still to recover from the regulatory clamps meant to discipline its wayward behavior and haphazard growth, the employment scene will take time to pick up.

The forthcoming election is further likely to slow down business decisions for growth and investment. Even though the nation-wide elections will inject a lot of money into the economy providing boost to poll-related production and jobs, what follows the elections would hold the key to further direction of the economy. Several sectors require structural changes to get back on the growth path.

For instance, even though consumer price inflation registered a four month high of 2.57 per cent in February, farmers still were denied equitable prices for their produce. Thus, vegetables, fruits and pulses registered negative rates of inflation in the latest survey. This may be good for the consumers but for the farmers it was a cause of concern, who in any case get in hand a small fraction of the retail price at which the farm produce is sold.

Even the overall economic growth has been contracting. In the quarter ending December 2018 GDP grew at 6.6 per cent. The overall growth for 2018-19 is unlikely to be much above seven per cent. The government might blame the legacy issues such as a mountain of bad bank loans and over-capacities in key sectors such as real estate and even power, but after five years the economy should have been back on rails for it to be able to grow at a decent seven-plus percentage.

Unfortunately, the global economy now shows signs of a slowdown while the crude oil prices are moving upwards. This could be worrying for the bounce-back of the Indian economy. In this scenario, after elections it is important to have a stable government led by a known and experienced leader who can steer the economy on the growth path. Urgent steps will be required to boost overall economic growth once the electoral business is behind us.

Why bananas could be the fabric of the future	**Swiss Info** https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/exotic-fibres_why-bananas-could-be-the-fabric-of-the-future/44815992

Cotton is the king of natural fibres, but its large water footprint can create problems in areas where it's grown. Can Swiss experiments with fibres from banana stem, nettle, wood or flax offer better alternatives?

India is one of the world's largest cotton producers and exporters. However, the Cotton Association of India has been in a bit of a bind this year. It has already had to lower its cotton yield estimate for the 2018-2019 season three timesexternal link, always because of lack of water. Drought-like conditions in parts of India have even forced farmers to uproot their crops to preserve what little moisture remains in the soil.

"The water consumed to grow India's cotton exports in 2013 would be enough to supply 85% of the country's 1.24 billion people with 100 litres of water every day for a year. Meanwhile, more than 100 million people in India do not have access to safe water," states an article in The Guardian newspaperexternal link.

water consumption

Bananas also present a dilemma for Indian farmers, but for a different reason. The part of the plant that bears the fruit, known as the pseudostem, has to be removed after each harvest. The removal process that costs farmers around INR8,000-10,000 (CHF112-140) per hectare. India is the world's largest banana producer, but most of the fruits are consumed domestically.

Swiss innovation

A projectexternal link at the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences in Switzerland is researching ways to convert the banana pseudostem into yarn that can be used in clothing, aiming to make a more sustainable material.

“The main selling point is that unlike cotton, banana fibre is a waste product,” says project leader Tina Moor. “The objective of our project is to make prototype textiles to show companies and generate interest.”

Textile designers normally start with yarn, but in this case it was up to them to produce it. When the Lucerne team visited India, they found that the Navsari Agricultural University in the state of Gujarat was experimenting with making fibres but did not have any yarn available. Moor tried to get jute mills in India to make yarn from the fibre, but they were not interested.

“I took 40 kilos of banana fibres from India to Switzerland and tried to work with it,” says Moor.

After much trial and error, Moor managed to develop a spinning process from the core of the banana stem that yielded a fine and beautiful yarn. She then made fabric samples from the yarn and hopes to show them off to retailers at a textile expo in March.

India lukewarm to Beijing’s suggestions’	**The Hindu** https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/india-lukewarm-to-beijings-suggestions/article26548425.ece

Two-day conference on Engaging Rising China begins at MG University

While four decades of reform and opening up catapulted China into the second largest economy and the second largest defence spender , the country’s appetite changed from the low profile guidelines of Deng Xiaoping’s to that of ‘accomplish something’ under Xi Jinping, Srikanth Kondapalli, Chairman, Centre for East Asian Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU)’, has said.

He was delivering the keynote address at the two-day international conference on ‘Engaging Rising China: Strategic Options for Emerging India’, which began at the Mahatma Gandhi University (MGU) campus here on Friday.

Noting that the rise of China necessitated India to re-adjust its policies with engagement policies as a dominant theme towards China, he also said that India, however, had been lukewarm to Beijing’s suggestions for a free trade area or a Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership in the face of a mounting trade deficit against it.

Speaking on the occasion, Bertel Heurlin, Jean Monnet Professor and Director of China Security Studies, University of Copenhagen, noted that India was also taking serious regional responsibility and increasing global responsibility while being a growing military power. The event is being organised by the Institute for Contemporary Chinese Studies, MGU in collaboration with the School of International Relations and Politics and the Institute of Parliamentary Affairs, government of Kerala. Scholars from various international universities, including the Sun Yat-Sen University and

Wuhan University in China and Centre for Policy Studies, Nepal, made presentations in different panels. Sabu Thomas, Vice Chancellor in charge of MGU inaugurated the Conference. Swaran Singh, professor of International Studies, JNU will deliver the valedictory address at 2 PM on Saturday.

Hyderabad seeing 35% growth in home products	Telangana Today https://telanganatoday.com/hyderabad-seeing-35-growth-home-products

onsumer demand for home products in India is increasing at a rate of 20-25 per cent. And experts say Hyderabad is registering a growth which is above the national average with about 30-35 per cent year-on-year. Retail buying in the city has seen a significant surge in the last couple of years.

HGH India managing director Arun Roongta told Telangana Today, “Hyderabad’s unique blend of tradition and modernity will take the city’s home market growth story forward. Hyderabad is becoming the hub for home textiles, decorative accessories and houseware. With the co-existence of these components in the home market, the city has seen an influx of large number of national and international branded home stores.”

He added, “With rising per capita income and growing affluence of customers, the demand for more innovative, time-saving and convenience-oriented home products in Hyderabad is bound to grow. With Hyderabad attracting investments in both manufacturing and services sector, migration of people from other States has reached an all-time high. This is leading to demand for more houses along with the allied products associated with setting up of new homes.”

For consecutive years, Hyderabad has ranked on top in the ‘Quality of Life Index’ in India and the people here have developed a taste for a mix of unconventional and modern choices when it comes to home décor and product designs, particularly in the carpet and upholstery market.
Hyderabad-based Darpan Furnishings managing director Suleman Hirani, said, “With the growth in IT, life sciences and banking sectors, home buying has picked up in Hyderabad. Home category has seen a huge transformation in the last few years.”

He added, “We are constantly working on making innovative products and designs from newer sources. Aspirations of customers are changing and it’s a good sign for home products segment. We have created six stores in Hyderabad alone.”

HGH Trade Show
Roongta says, “At our annual HGH India trade show that we will be hosting in Mumbai between July 2 and 4 this year, we have decided to bring the home products of Hyderabad. Both home retailers and manufacturers from Hyderabad can showcase their creations in textiles, décor and houseware in the expo.”

The trade show will connect the buyers of home products with retailers, artisans and micro enterprises. Specality stores, luxury stores, boutiques, department stores, hyper markets, institutional buyers, interior designers, franchisees will attend the event besides importers and distributors.

Last year the trade show attracted 600 exhibitors from 30 countries and 35,000 retailers and buyers from 480 cities and towns from across India. This year over 40,000 retailers and buyers are likely to participate in the trade show. Home products market is growing fast. Home textiles segment alone is going to cross Rs 36,000 crore this year. Wallpaper and mattress segments are growing at a rate of 100-150 per cent.

DGFT extends date for filing receipt of request under EPCG Scheme till Sep 30, 2019	**KNN India** https://knnindia.co.in/news/newsdetails/sectors/dgft-extends-date-for-filing-receipt-of-request-under-epcg-scheme-till-sep-30-2019

Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) has further extended the date till September 30, 2019 for filing the receipt of request under Export Promotion Capital Goods (EPCG) Scheme.

The time period for the public notices issued by DGFT with regard to onetime condonation of time period in respect of obtaining block-wise extension in export obligation period under EPCG Scheme, onetime condonation of time period in respect of obtaining extension in export obligation period under EPGG Scheme and acceptance of installation certificate under EPCG scheme by the RAs wherein installation certificate is submitted beyond 18 months has been extended. EPCG is an export promotion scheme under which an exporter can import certain amount of capital goods at zero duty for upgrading technology related with exports. Under the EPCG Scheme, the authorization holders are required to submit the installation certificate showing installation of the capital goods to the Regional Authorities (RAs) within the prescribed time period. Sometimes, the submission of installation certificate to the RAs was not within the time prescribed on account of various reasons, including delay in installation of the machinery/delay in issuance of installation certificate etc.

WPI inflation for apparel down 0.7% in February 2019	**Fibre 2 Fashion** https://www.fibre2fashion.com/news/apparel-news/wpi-inflation-for-apparel-down-0-7-in-february-2019-248016-newsdetails.htm

India’s annual rate of inflation, based on monthly wholesale price index (WPI), stood at 2.93 per cent for the month of February 2019. The index for textiles rose by 0.2 per cent while for apparel it declined by 0.7 per cent in February, according to the provisional data released by the Office of the Economic Adviser, ministry of commerce and industry.

The official WPI for all commodities (Base: 2011-12 = 100) for the month of February 2019 rose by 0.3 per cent to 119.5 from the previous month’s level of 119.2, the data showed. The index for manufactured products (weight 64.23 per cent) for February 2019 rose by 0.2 per cent to 118.1 from the previous month’s level of 117.9. The index for ‘Manufacture of Wearing Apparel’ sub-group declined by 0.7 per cent to 139.2 from 140.2 for the previous month due to lower price of knitted and crocheted apparel (2 per cent).

The index for ‘Manufacture of Textiles’ sub-group rose by 0.2 per cent to 119.0 from 118.8 for the previous month due to higher price of weaving and finishing of textiles (1 per cent). However, the price of texturised and twisted yarn, cordage, rope, twine and netting, and other textiles (1 per cent each) declined.

The index for primary articles (weight 22.62 per cent) declined by 0.2 per cent to 134.2 from 134.5 for the previous month. The index for fuel and power (weight 13.15 per cent) rose by 1.7 per cent to 101.0 from 99.3 for the previous month due to higher price of furnace oil, naphtha, HSD, petroleum coke, petrol and kerosene.

Meanwhile, the all-India consumer price index (CPI) on base 2012=100 stood at 2.57 (provisional) in February 2019 compared to 1.97 (final) in January, 2019 and 4.44 in February, 2018, according to the Central Statistics Office, ministry of statistics and programme implementation.

China Promises to Treat All Firms Equally. Foreign Businesses Remain Wary	Bloom Berg.com https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-03-14/china-struggles-to-reassure-foreign-firms-with-new-regulations

The Chinese government wraps up its annual policy conference this week with the passage of a new foreign investment law that it hopes will keep global companies enthusiastic about the world's second largest economy -- a group it's never had trouble courting before.

But with its once white-hot growth decelerating, tit-for-tat tariffs in the ongoing trade war with the U.S. hitting consumer demand, and tense political relations with key trading partners like Canada and Australia, some foreign firms are finding the lure of China not what it once was.

The new foreign investment law, passed by Beijing's rubber-stamp legislative chamber on Friday to take effect on Jan. 1, 2020, is designed to keep their ardor burning by addressing a longstanding source of resentment: that vast swathes of China's economy remain closed off to foreign capital. Where foreign businesses are allowed to enter, a dense web of regulations forces them to not just partner with local companies but to sometimes share technology, a practice that critics say amounts to a forced transfer of crucial know-how to eventual competitors.

The updated law treats all companies registered in China equally, as opposed to the current division between local and foreign businesses, according to lawmakers. Government support will apply equally to foreign firms, and their applications for operating licenses won't be treated differently from domestic rivals, Beijing promises. Forced technology transfer will be banned.

Drafts of the law distributed to lawmakers last week also included the ability for companies to appeal government decisions and apply for settlement through a complaint mechanism.

Read more on how the new law affects China's tech giants

But crucial questions remain on how the lofty language will be executed, and whether the shift will create another hurdle by forcing companies from General Motors Co. to BASF SE to hammer out new contracts with their current local partners.

And the current set of promises is only the latest. "Our member companies no longer take at face value commitments made by the Chinese government on potential economic reforms," said Jake Parker, the vice president for China operations at the U.S.-China Business Council in Beijing. "I think they want to see specific implementation of specific policies, not promises of future action."

Shifting Sands

One immediate impact of the new foreign investment law will be to shake up the country's 300,000-plus foreign-local joint ventures, created under the old regime that forced foreign capital to find local partners to enter China's vast market.

Companies may be forced to draw up new contracts with their existing joint venture partners within five years to comply with the more general company law. In principle, it creates a more level playing field. But the need to amend existing contracts to comply will shake up fundamental agreements that the world's largest automobile makers and chemical companies have in place, said Paul McKenzie, managing partner at law firm Morrison Foerster.

The legislation's lack of detail also gives rise to concern that its broad protections may be over-ridden by industry-specific regulations that continue to disadvantage foreign firms, the American Chamber of Commerce in China said in a statement. The broad scope of a proposed "National Security Review" -- a mechanism for the government to exclude foreign businesses in certain sectors for security reasons -- is also concerning, the business group said.

Chinese media on Friday reported that the final law would contain last-minute changes to allay business criticism, including a prohibition on government officials leaking confidential corporate information. Those changes, however, only address "a small slice of the overall set of concerns our members have about the uneven playing field," Chamber Chairman Tim Stratford said.

Does China's New Investment Law Tackle U.S. Gripes?: QuickTake

The shifting legal environment adds to the impression that the game remains at the very best complicated and at the worst rigged against non-Chinese companies.

China has always been a complex operating environment for global businesses -- but that mattered less when astronomic growth and access to its vast consumer pool were the trophies for those who endured. Now, Chinese consumers' financial health is not just a widespread concern, but a factor dragging down the overall performance of companies from Walmart Inc. to Apple Inc. and Tupperware Brands Corp., all of whom have recently reported sluggish sales on the mainland.

While global giants from Starbucks Corp. to BMW AG are continuing to expand, companies that haven't started in China yet are now hesitant about entering the market, said Iris Pang, an economist at ING Bank NV in Hong Kong.

And entrenched businesses are finding themselves trying to put their best spin on things. Asked about the weakness in its Chinese sales on an earnings call in February, Walmart chief executive officer Doug McMillon said: "Considering all the things that are happening in China, we're in pretty good shape."

Collateral Damage

It could be worse: they could be Canadian. Beijing and Ottawa have been at odds since December, when Canadian police arrested Meng Wanzhou, the chief financial officer of Huawei Technologies Co., in response to a U.S. extradition request. China subsequently detained two Canadians on ill-defined spying allegations, prompting firms including Royal Bank of Canadato ask employees to avoid traveling there.

Canada Goose Holdings Inc. still managed to open a store in Beijing last December after a slight delay, but the perennial prospect of being ensnared as collateral damage in a geopolitical dispute looms over foreign companies. Korean firms learned this the hard way in 2017, after their government agreed to deploy the Thaad missile-defense system, intended to safeguard against attacks by North Korea, over Chinese objections.

Brands from Hyundai Motor Co. to Amorepacific Corp. saw sales plunge from a boycott, K-pop performances were canceled and retail conglomerate Lotte was so harassed by officials for allowing one of its golf courses to be used for a Thaad battery that it's largely wound down its Chinese operations.

"Just because you're a good company with a good brand and know how to operate, it doesn't mean you can come into China and gain ground, because the deck is so stacked against you," said Leland Miller, CEO of China Beige Book, an economics consultancy.

Uzbekistan increases its presence in Chinese market	**Azer News.com** https://www.azernews.az/region/147399.html

Today, the textile industry of Uzbekistan is part of the intangible cultural heritage, which has preserved the traditions of ancestors in the production of textile products - the manufacture of fabrics, clothing, carpet weaving.

Uzbekistan attaches priority importance to further strengthening the strategic partnership with China. Expanding cooperation between the two countries in all areas is based on the principles of mutual benefit, consideration of interests and equality.

The delegation of the Association "Uztextileprom" and domestic manufacturers of the textile, garment and knitwear industry take part in the International Exhibition of Textile Fiber, Yarn Expo Spring 2019 in Shanghai (China), the press service of the Association Uztextileprom reports.

The Uzbek delegation visited an exhibition in order to expand export deliveries to the countries of Southeast Asia, as well as to establish direct contacts with potential consumers and to conclude export contracts with them, on March 12-14.

Yarn Expo is an important sourcing platform where suppliers from Asian and European countries showcase their latest collections of fiber and yarn, including natural (cotton, wool, silk, linen, ramie), artificial, blended, reconstituted, as well as speciality products.

For foreign suppliers, it is an opportunity to strengthen trade relations in the region and increase its presence in the Chinese market.

Such companies as Textile Technologies Group Surxon Teks and Global Textile Solutions, as well as a number of domestic companies in the industry, took part in the exhibition.

During the exhibition, meetings and negotiations with potential investors were organized and the parties discussed issues of further expanding cooperation in the textile and garment and knitwear industry.

In parallel with Yarn Expo Spring 2019, four more exhibitions will take place: the leading exhibition of apparel fabrics and accessories Intertextile Shanghai Apparel Fabrics," the exhibition of home textiles InterTextile Shanghai Home

Textiles," the exhibition of knitted clothing and knitwear PH Value" and the fashion exhibition CHIC, in which delegation of the Association Uztextileprom will participate.

These exhibitions are an ideal opportunity to gain access to the leading suppliers of textile raw materials in China. They help to strengthen the trade relations of domestic manufacturers of the textile and garment and knitwear industry in the region and increase their presence in the Chinese market.

Diplomatic relations between Uzbekistan and China were established on January 2, 1992.

The trade turnover between the two countries totalled $ 6.43 billion in 2018. Of this amount, $ 2.869 billion is Uzbek exports, as many as $ 3.559 billion is imports.

China received $ 2.1 billion due to an increase in construction in Uzbekistan. With this money, Uzbekistan has acquired special construction equipment from China.

Commodities: Listless trading on cotton market	**Dawn.com** https://www.dawn.com/news/1464732/commodities-listless-trading-on-cotton-market

The cotton market turned listless on Monday amid mounting tension between India and Pakistan in the aftermath of the recent terrorist attack in the Indian occupied Kashmir last week.

At the outset, there was no evidence of buying interest and the trading ring gave a deserted look.

Despite short crop, which is now being estimated not more than 10.8 million bales, the buyers' interest was totally lacking.

According to brokers, rumours that India is going to impose a 200 per cent duty on Pakistani imports and exports raised concern as Pakistani spinners are currently depending on cotton imports from India.

However, Atul Ganatra, President of the Cotton Association of India (CAI) is reported to have stated, "Cotton export is unaffected so far and we expect Pakistan to not pose hurdles as their cotton industry requires raw material from India. India is the most accessible and cost-effective market for them."

The cotton yarn market also turned inactive as there was no demand from the value-added textile sector.

The Karachi Cotton Association (KCA) spot rates were firm at weekend level of Rs8,600 per maund.

In the absence of trading interest, no transactions were reported to have materialised on ready counter.

Yarn production, innovation centre set up in Philippines	Fibre 2 Fashion https://www.fibre2fashion.com/news/yarn-news/yarn-production-innovation-centre-set-up-in-philippines-248025-newsdetails.htm

A Regional Yarn Production and Innovation Centre (RYPIC) was recently set up in Miagao, Iloilo, in the Philippines at a cost of PHP 41.57 million. Conceptualized in 2015 and funded by the Department of Science and Technology (DOST), it will revive the textile sector in Western Visayas taking into account social, economic, ecological and sustainability considerations.

An agreement was signed by DOST, DOST-Philippine Textile Research Institute (PTRI), Greatwomen Philippines Corporation (GWPhC), and the municipality of Miagao for establishment of the centre.

PTRI will first train people who will operate the facility, which is hosted by the Iloilo Science and Technology University (ISAT U) through its Miagao campus. ISAT U will later partner with the GreatWomen Philippines that will run the operations at the end of the two-year project, according to a news agency report.

A second phase of the project is possible, said DOST-PTRI director Celia Elumba.

The centre now is equipped with 15 machines, nine for spinning and six for pre-treatment.