ECONOMIC TIMES, KOLKATA 03 JUNE 2022

BUYERS TO LOOK FOR OPTIONS TO DIVERSIFY RISKS

Garment Cos Turn to India as Lockdowns Hit China Output

Negotiation on with buyers from Czech Republic, Egypt, Greece, Mexico, Spain, S Africa

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Kolkata: New garment buyers from the Czech Republic, Egypt, Greece, Jordan, Mexico, Spain, Turkey, Panama, and South Africa among others have started negotiating with Indian companies to replace purchases from China. The extended Covid lockdowns in China have restricted supplies, forcing buyers to look for other options to diversify risks.

"Sotoreves SL, a Spanish garment company wants 1 lakh pieces of tie and dye and printed shirts. Negotiations have started with them," said Lalit Thukral, president of Noida Apparel Export Cluster.

Another buyer from South Africa, Lizzard Pty, which has 180 stores, wants to buy women's clothing, he said, while a buyer from Greece wants men's garments.

The Noida Apparel Export Cluster has 3000 units with an annual turnover of Rs 35,000 crore and employs around 9,00,000 lakh people.

China has eased Covid restrictions in Shanghai after two months of lockdown on Tuesday, but the country's "zero Covid" policy continues and nearly 650,000 will remain confined to their homes.

"The buyers still see uncertainty in China," Thukral said.

The entry of new buyers at Noida Export cluster has also raised hopes for the Tirupur garment manufacturers.

"We are the largest manufacturer of knitwear apparel in India. If they come to Noida, they will also come to us," said Raja Shanmugam, President, Tirupur Exporters Association (TEA).

"The only concern to us is the rising cotton prices, which may impact the delivery of goods within the stipulated time frame."

India recorded its highest-ever textiles and apparel exports in FY22 at $44.4 billion, a rise of 41% compared to FY21.

The USA was the top export destination for the country's textiles and apparel shipments accounting for 27% share, followed by the European Union (18%), Bangladesh (12%), and UAE (6%).

Export of ready-made garments stood at $16 billion showing a growth of 31% over FY21.

However, the high cotton prices are dampening the export opportunity that has opened up for Indian manufacturers.

Narendra Goenka, chairman, Apparel Export Promotion Council said, "China plus one strategy would have worked much better had the cotton and yarn prices would have been less."

A candy (356 kg) of cotton is now fetching a price of Rs 1 lakh compared with about Rs 37,000 a year ago.

NEW AVENUES

New global garment buyers negotiating with Indian cos

Seek to replace purchases from China

Extended Covid lockdowns in China restrict supplies

Buyers mainly from Czech Republic, Egypt, Greece, Jordan, Mexico, Spain, Turkey, Panama & South Africa

India recorded highest-ever textiles & apparel exports in FY22 at $44.4 b, a 41% rise compared to FY21

Export of ready-made garments stood at $16 b, a growth of 31% over FY21

ECONOMIC TIMES, KOLKATA 03 JUNE 2022

TRADE DEFICIT WIDENS TO $23.3 B IN MAY LED BY MASSIVE RISE IN GOLD IMPORTS

Export Growth Slows, Imports Swell 56%

Merchandise exports grew 15.46% y-o-y to $37.29 b in May, slower than the 30.7% growth registered in April

Our Bureau

New Delhi: India's trade deficit swelled to $23.33 billion in May from $6.53 billion a year ago as exports growth moderated while imports surged, official data released on Thursday showed.

Merchandise exports grew 15.46% year-on-year to $37.29 billion in May, slower than the 30.7% growth registered in April. Led by a massive 759.6% rise in gold imports, the country's total imports rose 56.14% to $60.62 billion in May, driving the trade deficit higher.

Petroleum products (52.71%), electronic goods (41.46%) and readymade garments of all textiles (22.94%), posted strongest exports growth in May from a year ago.

"The slow growth in exports is an indication that we are set for tough times ahead as the geopolitical factors have begun playing out," said an industry representative.

Mahesh Desai, Chairman, EEPC India said that in the short and medium term, there are fears of demand slowdown in advanced economies which could potentially dent the ongoing momentum.

The imports of petroleum and crude oil surged 91.6% to $18.14 billion in May while those of coal, coke and briquettes jumped 167.73% to $5.33 billion. Gold imports increased to $5.82 billion from $677 million in May 2021.

"Industry had expected the challenges related to logistics and freight to impact trade from September onwards but it is visible now," the representative added.

Non-oil, non-gold, silver and precious metals imports, an indicator of the strength of domestic demand, rose 27.2% in May, slower than 34.37% in April.

FINANCIAL EXPRESS, ND 03-06-2022

EXPORT GROWTH SLOWS TO 15.5%

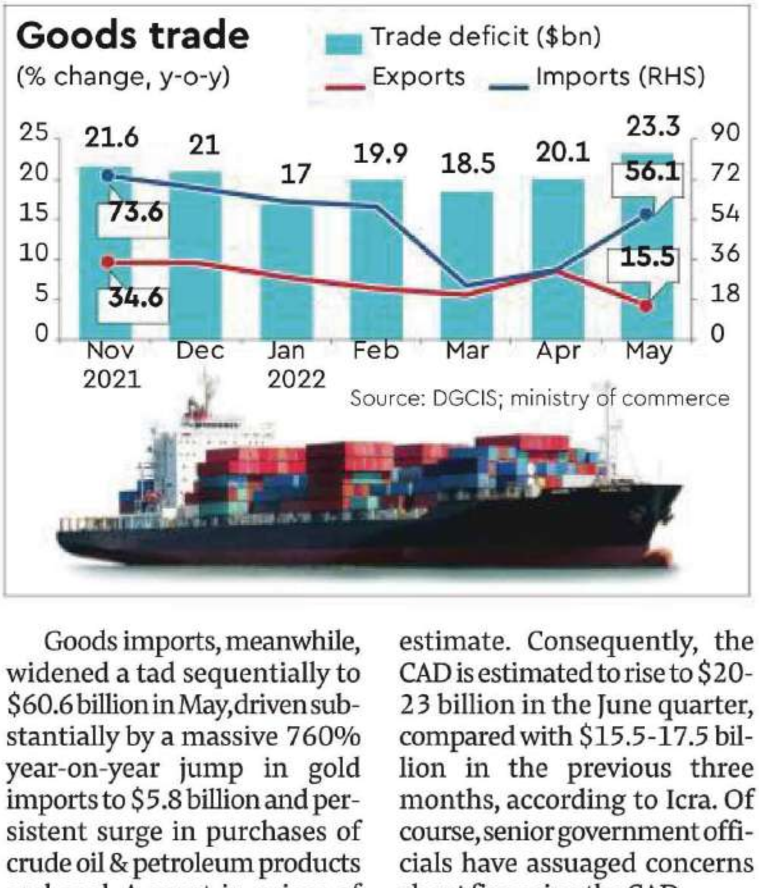
Trade deficit widens to record $23.3 bn in May

Fresh challenges in global supply chains and the curb on wheat supplies weighed on growth in shipments

FE BUREAU
New Delhi, June 2

MERCHANDISE EXPORT GROWTH slowed to 15.5% on-year in May, albeit on a high base, from 30.7% in the previous month even as the surge in imports continued unabated on the back of elevated global commodity prices, especially of crude oil, driving up trade deficit to a fresh peak of $23.3 billion.

According to the preliminary data released by the commerce ministry on Thursday, exports eased from the lofty $40-billion mark for the first time in three months and stood at $37.3 billion in May, possibly reflecting the impact of a gradual demand slowdown in advanced economies that had contributed substantially to India's post-pandemic export resurgence. Fresh challenges in the global supply chains and the curb on wheat supplies, too, weighed on export growth.



Goods imports, meanwhile, widened a tad sequentially to $60.6 billion in May, driven substantially by a massive 760% year-on-year jump in gold imports to $5.8 billion and persistent surge in purchases of crude oil & petroleum products and coal. A spurt in prices of crude oil and coal just served to inflate the import bill of a net commodity importer like India, raising the risks of a jump in current account deficit.

Without substantial easing of international commodity prices, trade deficit will likely exceed the crucial $20-billion mark in most of the months in FY23, according to an earlier Icra estimate. Consequently, the CAD is estimated to rise to $20-23 billion in the June quarter, compared with $15.5-17.5 billion in the previous three months, according to Icra. Of course, senior government officials have assuaged concerns about financing the CAD.

Among high-value segments, the rise in exports in May was led by petroleum products (53%), followed by electronics (41%) and garments (23%). At $24 billion, core exports (excluding petroleum and gems and jewellery) growth slowed down to 8.6% in May from 19.9% in the previous month.

Core import growth, too, slowed from April's 34.4% but still remained high at 27.2% to $26.4 billion, suggesting decent domestic demand. Among the key commodity segments, purchases of coal jumped 168% to $5.3 billion, petroleum 92% to $18.1 billion and electronics 28% to $5.4 billion.

As *FE* has reported, while orders are still flowing in from certain jurisdictions, the supply-side disruptions in the aftermath of the Russia-Ukraine war have hit domestic exporters' ability to ship out goods. The surge in international shipping costs has made the matter worse. The World Trade Organization, too, has slashed its 2022 global trade growth forecast to 3% from an earlier projection of 4.7%, which would weigh on the prospects of Indian exports as well.

However, as commerce and industry minister Piyush Goyal said earlier, exporters will likely benefit from the recently-concluded free trade agreement with the UAE and another deal with Australia.

Importantly, merchandise exports hit a record $422 billion in FY22, as an industrial resurgence in advanced economies (before the Ukraine war in late February) stirred demand for Indian goods.

FINANCIAL EXPRESS, ND 03-06-2022

'Garment sector will make all efforts to reach exports target'

THE GARMENT industry will make all efforts to achieve the export target of $20 billion in this fiscal, Apparel Export Promotion Council (AEPC) said on Thursday.

MILLENNIUM POST N.D 3/6/2022

India's exports jump 15.46% to $37.29 billion in May

Trade deficit widens to $23.33 billion during the month of May 2022, while it stood at $6.53 billion in May 2021

OUR CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI: India's merchandise exports rose by 15.46 per cent to $37.29 billion in May on account of healthy performance by sectors like petroleum products, electronic goods and chemicals, even as the trade deficit widened to $23.33 billion during the month, the commerce ministry said on Thursday.

Imports during the month too grew by 56.14 per cent to $60.62 billion.

The trade deficit in May 2021 stood at $6.53 billion.

"India's merchandise export in April - May 2022-23 was $77.08 billion with an increase of 22.26 per cent over $63.05 billion in April -May 2021-22," it said.

Petroleum and crude oil imports during May 2022 surged by 91.6 per cent to $18.14 billion.

Coal, coke and briquettes imports jumped to $5.33 billion, as against $2 billion in May 2021.

Gold imports increased to $5.82 billion during the month under review, from $677 million in May 2021.

Cumulative imports in April-May 2022-23 rose by 42.35 per cent to $120.81 billion.

Gold imports increased to $5.82 billion during the month under review, from $677 million in May 2021. Gems and jewellery exports stood at $3.1 billion in May against $2.96 billion in May 2021

Trade deficit during the first two months of this fiscal widened to $43.73 billion as against $21.82 billion earlier.

Engineering goods exports in May increased by 7.84 per cent to $9.3 billion, while petroleum products exports grew by 52.71 per cent to $8.11 billion.

Gems and jewellery exports stood at $3.1 billion in May against $2.96 billion in the same month last year.

Exports of chemicals rose by 12 per cent to $2.5 billion in May.

Similarly, shipments of pharma and ready-made garments of all textiles grew by 5.78 per cent and 23 per cent to $1.98 billion and $1.36 billion respectively during the month under review.

PIONEER HYDERABAD 3/6/2022

Textile town transformed with Rs 2,500-cr work orders

PNS ■ SIRCILLA

The textile town of Sircilla, which was once known for weaver suicides, has developed in leaps and bounds as the TRS government in general and local MLA KT Rama Rao in general paid more attention studying the gamut of the problem and came up with innovative solutions to improve the lot of the weavers.

As a result, suicides by weavers have become almost zero. KTR who also holds the textiles portfolio changed contours of Sircilla, which is known for powerloom industry in Telangana.

During his visit to Sircilla during the movement for Telangana, KTR was moved at the plight of the weavers and slogans written on walls asking weavers not to take the extreme step.

To find a lasting solution to the weavers' problem, the government managed to get orders from 14 government departments and implemented special action plan since 2014-15 to turn around the textile industry.

As a result, orders poured in to powerloom industry for weaving school uniforms from social welfare, BC welfre, tribal welfare, TSWREIS. Jyotiba Phule Telangana BC Welfare Residential Educational Society, police department, Sarva Siksha Abhiyan, weaving Batukamma Saris, KCR kits, Ramzan and Christmas gifts offered by the state government to Muslims and Christians. Total orders worth Rs 2,500 crore were placed with weaver since 2014-15 beginning from initial work order of 117.27 crore in 2014-15. In recent years, work orders were given worth Rs 398.28 crore in 2017-18 and Rs 459.12 crore in 2018-19. It may be recalled that CM K Chandrashekhar Rao has gone on record to extend Cheneta Beema to weavers on the lines of Rytu Beema extending an insurance cover for Rs 5 lakh. On account of this, there was a sea change in the lives of the who on an average earn at least Rs 16,000 to Rs 20,000 a month. The work orders from government keep them busy for six to eight months in a year. Over 15,000 weavers are benefited by the government orders.

Later, KTR strived for implementation of programmes to build group worksheds, thrift scheme and common amenities centre, yarn depot, Janasri Beema Yojna for powerloom industry. An apparel park is coming up at Peddur village at a cost of Rs 174 crore in 60 acres of land. Gokuldas Images has already set up its unit in the park at a cost of Rs 4.50 crore providing employment to 950. Once the park is completed, it would gainfully employ at least 8000 workers in garments sector. An administrative building built at a cost of Rs 14.50 crore, dining hall, public toilets, four-lane roads, drainages were already inaugurated.

A training centre has been set up in Textile Park to train women in apparel and garment sector. So far the training centre trained 2085 women in 67 batches on how to stich on Zuki machines.In all, 460 women have been provided placements.

BUSINESS STANDARD MUMBAI 3/6/2022

'Will have to consider price hikes in FY23 as well'

Page Industries, the exclusive licensee of Jockey International for the manufacture, distribution, and marketing of the Jockey brand in India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, and the UAE, reported a margin of 24 per cent in the January-march quarter despite inflation. **CHANDRASEKAR K**, CFO at Page Industries, talks about increasing its retail footprint and the margin performance for FY23 in an interview with Sharleen D'Souza. Edited excerpts:

Q&A

CHANDRASEKAR K
CFO, Page Industries

How is demand panning out? Is inflation impacting demand?

Demand has been good for us if you look at the past two years with the first quarter of both years largely affected by the Covid pandemic. We have still managed to deliver very good numbers and significantly crossed the pre-pandemic level.

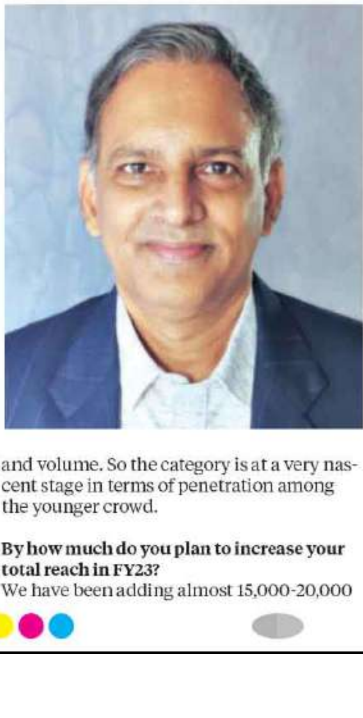
So, for us, demand has been good.

Do you plan to take further price hikes because of rising raw material prices?

Compared to competition, our price increases have been much lower. We did it only two times last year, whereas the cotton prices almost doubled over the past two years. So, we are facing inflation. Those (input costs) have sort of tempered down in Q4FY22 and even Q1, as we speak. But the price increase to maintain business volumes at a reasonable margin is inevitable for all the players. The only fallout of this is that Jockey has become more affordable. Some other players have had to take higher price increases. We are watching the situation on the cost front. We will have to consider price increases this year, as well. In FY22, we had two rounds of price increases of 5 per cent and 8 per cent.

Will athleisure continue to grow for you as a category?

The everyday wear athleisure segment is growing rapidly. It is not just growing online but offline, as well. According to the data that we have, in the premium athleisure segment, we have only penetrated about seven to eight per cent and this means that in a population of 100, there are still who is the target customer for Jockey and we are the only national player with that kind of size and volume. So the category is at a very nascent stage in terms of penetration among the younger crowd.



By how much do you plan to increase your total reach in FY23?

We have been adding almost 15,000-20,000 stores in any given year. In the past two years, we have added close to 45,000 stores, which is almost two-thirds the size we had. Growth in the retail footprint has been around 67 per cent compared with the end of March 2020. We will have this kind of addition and we are still largely underpenetrated in the premium segment. We are the largest volume player and we are only penetrated close to about 12 per cent in the premium apparel manufacturing. We can easily grow to five times this size in terms of retail footprint.

Do you expect margins to remain at current levels?

We always aim for 20-21 per cent Ebitda margins and on top of it, you may get to certain operational efficiencies. So, we have good optics controls. In many quarters, we deliver upwards of 24 per cent as we did in Q4. But largely if you look at Q4, the impact was on account of the price increase of about 8 per cent at the end of Q3. Going forward, we will try to maintain the margin at these levels. There is always a fine balance between chasing volumes and maintaining margins.

INDIAN EXPRESS N.D 03/06/2022

A return on investment

UP's focus on increasing ease of doing business is yielding results

NAVNEET SEHGAL

THERE IS AN unparalleled opportunity for Uttar Pradesh today to grab the lion's share of both national and global investments. If Yogi Adityanath's new focus on the economy sounds familiar, that's because he's done it before. The reboot of law and order in the last five years has played a huge role in perpetuating a changed perception of the state.

As a result of the CM's vision of "Reform, Perform, Transform" under the guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the state has reaped the benefit of a "double-engine government" and emerged as one of the favourite destinations for investors.

One of the primary reasons for this is the UP government being at the forefront of embracing digital transformation and relentlessly pushing the PM's vision of a Digital India. The UP government has relied on e-governance as it fosters a broader change in the relationship between the government and stakeholders. As part of this, a single-window clearance system has been implemented, which has made the investment process extremely user-friendly. The UP government came up with new policies with a focus on "ease of doing business", particularly in the food processing, electronics, textiles and pharmaceutical sectors. As a result of this, the state jumped from the twelfth to the second position, in terms of ease of doing business in India.

Industry leaders like Microsoft, Samsung, Reliance, Adani Enterprises, Hiranandani Group, etc. are among the big names making investments in the state.

Other investments combined with the Investors Summit resulted in a total investment of Rs 4.28 lakh crore out of which proposals worth Rs 1.05 lakh crore have materialised already. In the first phase of the ground breaking ceremony, investment proposals for 81 projects amounting to more than Rs 61,800 crore have materialised. This includes investments by top companies such as Infosys, Reliance and Paytm in crucial projects. Meanwhile, the second phase saw investment proposals for 290 projects amounting to more than Rs 67,000 crore. Of these, investment projects worth around Rs 96,000 crore are on the verge or have already started commercial operations.

As we get ready for our third ground breaking ceremony of around 1,400 projects worth Rs 80,000, it is one more step towards achieving the target of the state becoming a $1 trillion economy.

It has been one of our major tasks to reignite the true engine of the state's economic growth — MSMEs. The government will see 805 units of the MSME department roll out projects worth Rs 4,459 crore. This investment is part of the 1,400 projects worth Rs 80,000 crore slated to be launched during the ceremony. The investment will give a big push to the state's economy while creating jobs for people in their own districts and the targeted chunk of investment alone will generate over 5,00,000 jobs in the state.

The highest number of MSME units will be set up in Gautam Buddha Nagar and Ghaziabad districts where 309 units will come up with an investment of Rs 1,847 crore. Here, 3,800 employment opportunities will be created. It will be followed by Mathura where 67 units are coming up at an investment of Rs 547 crore. Together, they will create 2,153 jobs.

Projects worth around Rs 20,000 crore in the data centre sector, followed by projects worth around Rs 11,300 crore in the agri and allied sector, projects worth around Rs 7,800 crore in the IT and electronics sector will be launched besides many others in the textile, tourism, energy and pharma sectors.

Some prominent investors include: Adani Group's data centre (Rs 5,100 crore), Hiranandani Group's two data centres in Noida (Rs 9,100 crore), Microsoft's software development centre (Rs 2,100 crore) and Dalmia Group's cement manufacturing plant in Mirzapur (Rs 600 crore).

The huge interest shown in the state by top industrial houses across a variety of sectors will go a long way in boosting the state's economy and is likely to create lakhs of jobs. This has been possible because of the sustained efforts of the state government to provide a conducive work environment to global and multinational companies.

This includes providing ease of doing business, starting with the setting up of companies to build infrastructure, provide security, human resources and a suitable environment to highly-skilled professionals and executives.

The writer is Additional Chief Secretary, Department of MSME, Government of Uttar Pradesh

SPORTKING, steady expansion of spinning capacity

The company produces a well-diversified range of grey and dyed textile yarns to cater to the demands of the weaving and knitting industry


Munish Avasthi, Managing Director, Sportking India

Established in 1989, Sportking India Limited is one of India's leading textile companies and owns three state-of-the-art manufacturing facilities equipped with the latest machinery to produce yarns of benchmark quality. The company produces a well-diversified range of grey and dyed textile yarns to cater to the demands of the weaving and knitting industry in domestic as well as international markets. With a presence in more than 30 countries, Sportking India represents India on the world stage with a commitment to deliver superior quality products among evolving trends in customer preferences.

Sportking India's revenues in FY 2022 increased 64.9% year-on-year to Rs 2,154 crore. The company has successfully completed expansion at its Bathinda complex, adding 68, 000 spindles at its state-of-the-art plant, achieving total overall capacity of 275, 000 spindles. The current capacity utilisation across all the units is more than 95%. Unit 1 has a capacity of 65,904 spindles focussing on acrylic and polyester-blended cotton yarn. Unit 2 is a dye house with a capacity of 15-20 MTPD to support Unit 1 and 3 for synthetic fibre and yarn dyeing and processing.

Unit 3 is a spinning unit with 208, 800 spindles. This unit focuses on compact and contamination-free cotton and polyester cotton-blended yarn. As part of its expansion programme, in the first phase Sportking India will add 40,800 spindles at the Bathinda unit, the commercial operations of which are scheduled to begin from June or July 2022. In the next phase of expansion, the company will add 63,072 spindles and a 10 MW rooftop solar plant for captive power consumption. The new spinning capacity is expected to start commercial production by Q4 of FY 2022-23.

Nitin Spinners announces ambitious expansion programme

The company plans to invest Rs 955 crore for capacity expansion, which will be funded by Rs 300 crore of internal accruals and Rs 655 crore of debt

"We have achieved the highest ever revenue of Rs. 2,692 crore, growth of 66% over the previous year along with highest-ever profitability. We have doubled our exports during the current year as compared to the previous year.

- Dinesh Nolkha, MD, Nitin Spinners

Nitin Spinners is India's leading manufacturer of cotton yarn and blended yarn with knitted and woven finished fabric. The company's leadership in cotton and blended yarn along with fabric manufacturing is driven by delivering international quality standard products with continuous investment in latest technologies. Elaborating, Managing Director Dinesh Nolkha says, "We have achieved the highest ever revenue of Rs 2,692 crore, growth of 66% over the previous year along with highest-ever profitability. We have doubled our exports during the current year as compared to the previous year."

"At present we are operating at nearly optimum capacity and strategically enhancing capacity in all these segments, including spinning, knitting and woven fabric to meet the increasing market demand. We are also increasing our blended yarn production capacity substantially and are investing Rs 955 crore for capacity expansion, which will be funded by Rs 300 crore of internal accruals and Rs 655 crore of debt. We aim to capture the benefit of growing market opportunity in international as well as domestic sectors and strengthen the company's position by widening our product portfolio as well," he adds.

Impressive Financials

Nitin Spinners clocked revenues of Rs 2,692 crore in FY22 as compared to Rs 1,624 crore in FY21, registering a growth of 66%. Apart from operational efficiency and value-added products, increased selling rates due to higher raw material price also resulted in higher revenue. During the year the company produced 71,850 metric tonnes of yarn as against 63,973 metric tonnes in the previous year. Out of the yarn produced, 24% is exclusively consumed in the knitted fabric and woven fabric division. Knitted fabric production was to the tune of 8,057 metric tonnes during FY22 and woven fabric production for the year was 269.47 lakh metres.

Production Capacities

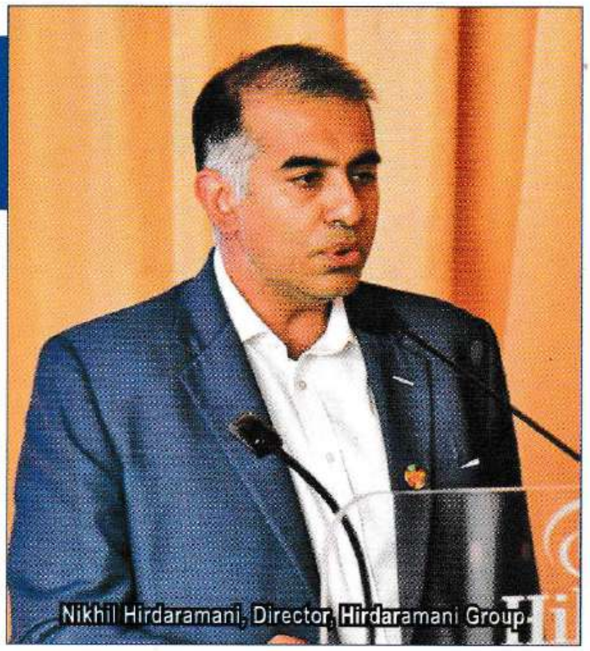
The finished fabric production was to the tune of 213.73 lakh metres in FY22. In spinning, the capacity utilisation level was around 96% for the last financial year while the weaving capacity was 95%, knitting was 85% and finished fabric was around 83%. As part of the overall expansion project, Nitin Spinners is adding capacities in spinning, weaving, knitting and finishing departments. "We will be increasing our spindleage from 3.32 lakh equivalent spindles to about 4.88 lakh equivalent spindles, increasing our capacity from 75,000 metric tonnes to about 110,000 metric tonnes per annum. Similarly, our knitting capacity as well as our weaving capacity will also be ramped up by about 35% each," informs Nolkha.

Blended Yarn

Nitin Spinners is investing in increasing the manufacturing capacity for blended yarn. The company has been able to use sustainable recycled fibres, recycled cotton, organic cotton and blends of fibres like viscose and modal. Currently, Nitin Spinners has a capacity of 28,000 spindles for manufacturing blended yarn. The company is adding 45, 000 spindles as part of the overall expansion plan specifically for blended yarns. ◆

HIRDARAMANI GROUP's
'Future First' Sustainability Roadmap 2025

Hirdaramani Group has launched its Sustainability Roadmap, 'Future First' – a unified and holistic sustainability plan with ambitious targets for 2025.



The Group's 'Future First' roadmap collates and builds on several years of sustainability efforts and investments by the company. It takes stock of existing sustainability mechanisms, outlines the Group's ethos and sets new goals for the company to achieve globally across all its facilities in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Vietnam and Ethiopia. The roadmap has been developed on years of experience and inputs from experienced consultants. It is designed across four pillars of sustainability: conserving the environment, empowering associates, supporting communities and trusting in good choices. The roadmap takes into account local and international contexts, global apparel programs on sustainability and is guided by the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Future First initiatives are also aimed at supporting the Government's climate change commitments made at the recently completed COP26 summit.

"Hirdaramani has always been a leader in sustainability, holding itself accountable to rigorous standards while championing better business practices. 'Future first' is a unified, global approach and sets new targets for our sustainability efforts. What sets it apart is that it takes on sustainability through a nuanced, multi-dimensional approach and was designed through extensive consultation with multiple stakeholders. Conservation is a key part of it but so is the empowerment of our employees, the supporting of communities and building trust throughout the supply chain," said Nikhil Hirdaramani, Director – Hirdaramani Group.

For Hirdaramani, sustainability is a key tenet that has underscored all aspects in its operations for the 100+ years of its existence. In 2006, the Group moved into a more focused approach, investing considerably in holistic and meaningful sustainability efforts which have driven change throughout the organization. The 'Future First' roadmap expands its scale and unifies independent sustainability endeavours internationally into a cohesive, amalgamated approach. The Group is also investing in new technology and reporting standards for greater transparency and accountability, setting the sustainability bar higher for itself.

"It is clear that existing ways of doing business must change. There is a growing call for organizations to hold themselves accountable in issues of sustainability and we are proud to have always led the way. 'Future First' is a unified roadmap that builds on and is developed from decades-long sustainability efforts at Hirdaramani and is cognizant of changing local and global conditions, especially given the pandemic and environmental and social developments in recent years," commented Demith Gooneratne – Senior Manager, Environmental Sustainability.

In the past years, the Group has achieved net--zero for greenhouse gas emissions from energy across all its manufacturing operations in Sri Lanka and launched rooftop solar projects in Sri Lanka and Vietnam. It has received Fair Trade USA certification in five facilities, achieved LEED Gold/Platinum ratings in 11 facilities and also significantly reduced water and electricity consumption and waste in all its facilities.

Further, over 21,000 employees have been trained in Wonders of Wellbeing and Her+ programmes which have been internationally recognized.

By 2025, Hirdaramani Group hopes to achieve conservation goals in building, energy, water, waste, product and more, guided by the SDGs. There will also be an even stronger focus on its Wonders of Wellbeing program which takes a multi-dimensional approach to wellbeing with the simple yet meaningful goal of a 'Life Well Lived' for all employees. Hirdaramani also seeks to build on global collaborations with partners who work in spheres such as environmental impact, social and community, traceability, design and industry while connecting with industry movements spearheading innovation and sustainable change. ◆

U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol doubles grower participation in second year

The U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol announced that grower participation for the 2021/22 crop doubled since the program's pilot last year. The Trust Protocol's mission is to bring quantifiable and verifiable goals and measurement to the key sustainability metrics of U.S. cotton production.

The initiative's vision is to set a new standard in sustainable cotton production where full transparency is a reality and continuous improvement to reduce our environmental footprint is the central goal. The program's core values include a commitment to U.S. cotton's legacy of authenticity, innovation and excellence, environmental stewardship, caring of people, and personal and corporate integrity.

"During our second year we doubled the number of U.S. cotton growers in the program with an estimated 1.1 million cotton acres enrolled," said Dr. Gary Adams, president of the U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol. "Our grower members are global leaders when it comes to sustainable cotton production, and as supply chain membership continues to grow, producers are encouraged to join the initiative to help ensure there is enough cotton in the system to meet demand."

Virtually all the top 100 global brands and retailers have created lists of sustainable raw materials and publicly committed that 100% of their sourcing will come from these lists over the next 5-10 years. The Trust Protocol was designed to meet and exceed the rigorous criteria for these lists. To learn more or begin enrollment, growers can visit TrustUSCotton.org or reach out to the Grower Help Desk at growers@trustuscotton.org. Additionally, producers who enroll in the program and complete their data entry will be eligible for a redistribution of program revenue. The Trust Protocol has welcomed more than 600 brand, retailer, mill and manufacturer members since its launch in 2020. This includes J.Crew, Madewell, Levi Strauss & Co. and, Gap Inc. as well as global apparel manufacturer Gildan. The U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol is aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, recognized by Textile Exchange and Forum for the Future, and part of the Sustainable Apparel Coalition, Cotton 2025 Sustainable Cotton Challenge, Cotton 2040 and Cotton Up initiatives. The program has also been recognized and published in the ITC Standards Map.