

Thailand and Japan Textile & Apparel Industries Join Hands to Develop New Fabrics and Apparels for Export to Japan under JTEPA Framework

Bangkok – The Thai textile and apparel industry is very enthusiastic about enhancing its export capability in response to rising competition and expanding trade opportunities raised by effective FTAs. A part of this move, the project “Textile and Apparel Development for Export to Japan under JTEPA Framework” run by The National Federation of Thai Textile Industries is making good progress, with many new and innovative developments in the textile and apparel industry to be on display at BIFF&BIL 2010 in April this year.

Mr. Dej Pathanasethpong, Chairman of the National Federation of Thai Textile Industries, said: “Initiated under the Japan-Thailand Economic Partnership Agreement, or JTEPA, this project is mostly funded by Japan’s Ministry of Economy of Trade and Industry (METI) who has sent specialists to advise participating Thai manufacturers on marketing strategy, opportunity, strengths and weaknesses, fashion trends and manufacturing techniques. The specialists include Mr. Shigeru Furumiya, marketing specialist from Japan Textile Importer Association (JTIA), Prof. Tadao Takeuchi, fashion trend specialist from Bunka Fashion College and Mr. Akio Homma, dyeing and finishing specialist.

The bilateral collaboration has enabled Thai manufacturers to acquire profound understanding of the Japanese market requirements, and to deliver export products exactly tailored to seasons, target consumers, and expected Japanese standards involving colour, material, design, as well as look and feel. The project first started in mid 2009 and will continue for long term under the JTEPA agreement.”

Mr. Jumnong Nawasmittawong, Executive Director of Thai Garment Manufacturers Association and the Project’s manager, explained: “The Project is specially destined to develop fabrics and apparels for export to the Japanese market for Spring/Summer 2011 focusing on the high-grade casual wear segment. There are 12 Thai manufacturers participating in the project, 6 from weaving industry, 3 from dyeing and finishing, and 3 from apparel manufacturing. The project implementation takes 9 months, starting from July last year and will be complete in March this year.”

He continued, “All fabrics and apparels developed from participating manufacturers will be on show for the first time in the Japan Pavilion at BIFF&BIL 2010 in April this year. The Pavilion will also exhibit 20 costumes created by designers of Bunka Fashion Graduate University in Japan using the new fabrics from the project.”

The development process in the project started with Thai manufacturers’ representatives being sent to Japan in July 2009 to do research on the Japanese apparel market and find useful fabric samples according to the advice of designated Japanese specialists. At the same time a team of Japanese specialists was sent to Thailand to visit weaving, dyeing and finishing factories where they gave advice for further improvements. From here weavers and dyers joined in carrying out experiments and finalising their best possible fabric samples, and sent them to apparel factories who made finished products as guided by the specialists.

The making is based on *Natural Mind* concept from which Thai manufacturers are encouraged to design and create unique products of their own free will.

Mr. Shigeru Furumiya, a marketing expert representing the Japan Textile Importer Association (JTIA), advised on today’s Japanese apparel market trend that the most

favorite materials in Japan now were not restricted to Cotton 100%. "Tencel yarns, especially those made of multiple materials such as Tencel/Modal are also popular. The reason is that Japan is in a hot and humid zone. Thai manufacturers should therefore be more responsive to the market's requirements. One thing to be highlighted is the high-grade casual wear segment, which concentrates not only on the most current fashion trend, but also the premium quality – discoloration, shrinkage and alteration of shape are among major Japanese consumers' concerns."

"One of other challenges for entering the Japanese market is that importers tend to offer small order bid opportunities with the same pricing and quality requirements as what they deal with big orders. Moreover, there are several Japanese quality standards to be achieved. Any shipment that does not live up to these standards will not be allowed to be sold in the market. Thai manufacturers therefore should do some experiments, researching intensively before, during and after the production and offering product variety to their target customers. Also, insightful marketing data and trend forecast are highly essential."

Prof. Tadao Takeuchi, an expert from Bunka Fashion Graduate University, Japan, said: "The Japanese market trend for 2010 and 2011 is inspired by *Origin & Natural*, featuring a look and feel of lightness and smoothness. Classically decorated items with embroideries or functional add-ons, for example, can be more attractive among Japanese consumers."

"Despite the economic slowdown, Japanese consumers still demand high quality," said Prof. Takeuchi.

"One added benefit of this project in relation to the ASEAN-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership (AJCEP) is that Thai manufacturers have more opportunities to export their newly developed fabrics to other ASEAN's apparel manufacturing countries, whose finished products will be shipped to Japan under AJCEP. This indirectly helps open new channels for international trade and increase in export value between Thailand and neighboring countries," commented Srirat Rastapana, Director General of Department of Export Promotion (DEP), Ministry of Commerce.

Fabric and costumes developed by participating manufacturers in the project will be displayed at the Japan Pavilion in BIFF & BIL 2010, ASEAN Integration Textiles – Apparel – Leather to be held during 1-4 April 2010 at Challenger Hall 1-3, IMPACT Muang Thong Thani.

BIFF & BIL 2010 rides on the theme, *Look East*. This year's event will be a mega showcase of the brilliant fashion capability and specialties of 10 ASEAN nations under the ASEAN *INTEGRATION* initiative, covering everything from upstream, midstream and downstream industries.

The event will also play host to *Asian Designer Congress* and *Thailand Designer Contest*, and be packed with a series of conferences and seminars, 48 fashion shows, ASEAN Pavilion, Japan Pavilion, for instance.

For more information please visit www.biffandbil.com or www.depthai.go.th.



Posed with fabrics and apparels developed from the project at a recent press briefing to update the media on the progress of the project are Mr. Jumnong Nawasmittawong (far right), Executive Director of Thai Garment Manufacturers Association and Project Manager of "Textile and Apparel Development for Export to Japan under JTEPA Framework" ; Mr. Shigeru Furumiya (2nd right), Chief Researcher, Japan Textile Importer Association (JTIA); Prof. Tadao Takeuchi (2nd left) from Bunka Fashion Graduate University, Japan; and representatives from participating companies, Mr. Bandid Pongsarajanavit (far left), Managing Director of Thai Num Choke Textile Co., Ltd. and Mrs. Patcharawan Boonnamsap (middle), Executive Director of Well Garment Co., Ltd.



Fabrics developed from the project "Textile and Apparel Development for Export to Japan under JTEPA Framework"



The finished costumes from the project "Textile and Apparel Development for Export to Japan under JTEPA Framework"



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