



**Textile Global Digest**

-Tech Innovations First-

## Automation Is The Future, Says G.V. Aras



G.V. Aras, Director, A.T.E. Enterprises

Two American companies believe a solution to convert cloth into clothing without the need for tailors is just around the corner and this is just the beginning of an automation revolution that is poised to shake the world out of its reverie; and is the Indian textile industry prepared to face it?, was the crux of some of the important points raised by G.V. Aras, Director of Textile Engineering Group, A.T.E. Enterprises, during his keynote address at a TAI Seminar organised at Vapi last Saturday.

Aras decried that India is losing on competition due to lack of trade agreements and higher operating costs, and yarn exports are down by 40% due to reduced buying by China, but held out a hope that home textile exports growing with India's dominating position in US market.

There is no choice to adoption of automation and robotics, he said categorically. "Laser cutting, sew boats, 3D printing, and robotic arms have come to stay. The new materials today embrace fields such as monitoring of health parameters, enhanced aesthetics (change of colour, light up), protection against radiation, dry skin and wearable products," Aras said.

Customised manufacturing is the order of the day and production centres are becoming more customer-centric, he said. In a speech, punctuated with figures and facts, Aras said: “Micro-factories only can cater to today’s market demands. We are already seeing the results of the growth of on-line fashion industry and increase in on-line sales of fashion garments shaping the fashion and sales patterns.”

Dwelling on growing industry segments, Aras particularly mentioned the rising demand for technical textiles the world over, and referred to development of material science, new development in fibres, filaments, fabric finishes to enhance functionality of products and innovation like self-cleaning fabrics, photo-sensitive fabrics, shape adjusting fabrics and anti-virus fabrics. Saying that the Indian textile industry is lagging behind, he listed some of its woes: “Structural weakness in the manufacturing value chain – losing opportunity of value addition; Lack of state-of-the-art capacities in weaving and processing becoming hurdle in consistently producing high quality goods”. Lack of innovation and product development is likely to hamper moving up the value chain, he emphasised and added that non-alignment of different segments of the industry can result in inefficient textile production chain.

One more area that is developing fast is the luggage and bags fabric, and demand for products like luggage bags, suitcases, brief cases, school bags, bag packs, wallets, laptop bags and ladies bags has ever been rising at a faster pace, Aras said. “The other concepts in great demand are anti-microbial, water resistant, self-cleaning, UV protecting, flame-retardant and weather proof features,” he added.

At the outset, talking of the present conditions in the market, Aras said that the domestic yarn demand to remain stable, but export demand to drop sharply, with the margins declining by 100 – 200 bps in FY 2020, to remain at 11-12% in FY 2020-21. “Financial profile of spinners to remain weaker in short to medium term. Capacity addition will slow down due to excess capacity and lack of incentives. Lower cotton prices is crucial for industry’s survival. Lower crude oil prices are likely to result in decline in polyester feed stock prices including PTA, Paraxylene, MEG, etc. Polyester staple fibre consumption is expected to grow 2-4% CAGR over the next 5 years driven by exports. Higher consumption of polyester and viscose fibres and filament will happen due to gradual product shift to synthetics and blends with cotton,” Aras said.

Aras warned that the financial health is declining across all segments of textile value chain and that the Budget impact on textiles was neutral. He said that unless India tackles issues like environmental and sustainability and redesign the textile and apparel supply chain, a bigger crisis is awaiting. “FTAs may shape global trade and if India is slow in catching up with the fast-moving global trend in textiles, we might lose global opportunities,” he admonished.